

Tatler

SENATOR RISA HONTIVEROS

On her vision for a better Philippines,
women's issues, those pesky fake news and the future





louisvuitton.com

LOUIS VUITTON



REACH FOR THE CROWN





THE DAY-DATE







FENDI

ROMA

Serene, solemn,
spacious.

A WORLD OF TRANQUIL COMFORT.

Welcome to the Lexus LM - your very own first class luxury cabin suited for any journey.
Full Hybrid Electric Line-up available in 7 and 4 seat configurations.

V E R S A T I L E

LM





 **LEXUS**
EXPERIENCE AMAZING

Lexus.com.ph  (632) 8856 5050
Follow us on socials at /LexusPhilippines and @LexusPH

SEIKO

SINCE 1881



Keep Going Forward

 **PROSPEX**



DIRECTORY:

Ayala Center Cebu
Level 2, Ayala Center Cebu, Cebu Business Park,
Cebu City Tel No.: 0977-023-4407

Ayala Malls Manila Bay
2/F, Ayala Malls Manila Bay, Aseana City, Tambo,
Parañaque City Tel No.: 0917-650-4033/ (632) 7-916-7699

Glorietta 1
G/F, Glorietta 1, Ayala Center, Makati City
Tel No.: (632) 7-621-1522

Evia Lifestyle Center
G/F, Bldg. B, Evia Lifestyle Center, Daang Hari Road,
Almanza Dos, Las Piñas, City Tel No.: 0917-104-5892

Mitsukoshi, BGC
G/F, Mitsukoshi, 8th Avenue cor. 36th Street, Grand
Central Park, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City
Tel No.: 0917-717-0184/ (632) 7-005-7737

Power Plant Mall
R1 Floor, Power Plant Mall, Rockwell Center, Brgy.
Poblacion, Makati City Tel No.: (632) 7-118-3243

SM Megamall
5th Level, SM Megamall, Mega B, EDSA, Brgy. Wack-Wack
Mandaluyong City Tel No.: (632) 8-942-6245

SM City Cebu
Level 3, SM City Cebu, North Reclamation Area, Mabolo
Cebu City Tel No.: 0932-774-8771

SM Seaside City Cebu
Level 3, SM Seaside City Cebu, South Road Properties,
Cebu City Tel No.: 0943-456-5508

The Mall | Nustar
2/F, The Mall | Nustar, Kawit Island, South Road Properties,
Cebu City Tel No.: 0917-119-4672

AROUND ASIA

Every month, we curate an online selection of stories from the previous month's print editions of *Tatler Asia* for you to enjoy



TATLER PHILIPPINES

Industrial designer Kenneth Cobonpue shared his creative journey behind Fable Café + Lounge, his venture in Manila—and how its whimsical decor transports guests to another world.



TATLER KAZAKHSTAN

Designer Ulyana Sergeenko is known for her opulent couture. Since founding her eponymous label in 2011, she has become a prominent figure in haute couture, merging traditional motifs with modern elegance.

TATLER MALAYSIA

Dr Chong Pei Pei, director of the Digital Health and Medical Advancement Impact Lab at Taylor's University in Malaysia, shared the story behind the development of PapLite Pro, a pioneering cervical screening tool.



TATLER HONG KONG

We met Janet Yang, the first Asian American president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, who recalled her journey of perseverance, passion and vision.



SHANGLIU TATLER

Zhang Huan, celebrated as one of China's most influential contemporary artists, gave us rare insights into his creative process, his unique philosophy and the humour that underpins his bold, thought-provoking works.



TATLER SINGAPORE

Leon Foo, a coffee industry veteran and founder of coffee machine brand Morning, spoke about how his company is redefining the art of making the perfect cup of joe.



TATLER TAIWAN

Food writer and culinary instructor Wan-Ling Huang has dedicated much of her life to promoting and preserving traditional Taiwanese recipes. She told *Tatler* about what Taiwanese cuisine means to her and what she has learned from her experiences.



TATLER THAILAND

Rohit Sachdev, a visionary trendsetter in Thailand's hospitality industry, spoke to *Tatler* about building his restaurant and bar empire, Soho Hospitality. By bridging gaps in the market and blending passion and unique ideas with life experiences, he has created a success story that's one of a kind.



TATLER VIETNAM

Phuong Bui, the CEO of Hum Ventures, which owns the beloved Hum Dining vegetarian restaurant chain, has been pioneering the high-end plant-based cuisine market in Vietnam for more than a decade. She spoke to *Tatler* about the brand's vision and values when it comes to promoting a plant-forward approach to dining.



To read these stories, please scan the QR code



MaxMara

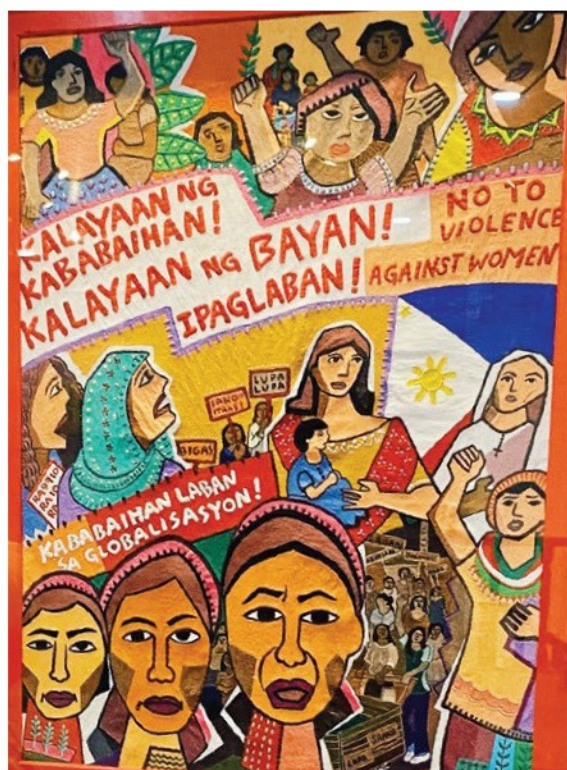
UNIT 9 LEVEL 1 GREENBELT 3, MAKATI CITY - TEL. +63 2 7116 2354
MAXMARA.COM

TATLERASIA.COM

The key stories to keep an eye on in this month's digital landscape

NO SMALL DREAMS

Josephine “Jo” Berry is a talented Filipina actor best known for her role as Ronalyn “Onay” Matayog-Samonte in the television series *Onay*. Through her performances, Jo has inspired many by overcoming the challenges of dwarfism. In this interview, she shares her journey of resilience and creativity, highlighting her passion for acting and her commitment to advocating for more excellent representation and inclusivity in the arts.



BY WOMEN, FOR WOMEN

A dynamic museum in Quezon City pays tribute Tandang Sora, the esteemed Filipino revolutionary heroine. Its exhibits showcase the powerful stories of women from both the streets and government offices. In this article, curator and feminist artist Sandra Torrijos highlights the importance of preserving these often-overlooked narratives, which enrich our understanding of history and inspire future generations.

BEYOND CLASSROOMS

In honour of Women's Month, *Tatler* highlights Dr Kathleen G Apilando, a prominent figure in hospitality and academia. She is celebrated for preserving the rich tradition of artisan sea salt production in the Philippines. Her dedication emphasises this craft's cultural significance and supports sustainable practices that benefit local communities, ensuring that this vital aspect of Philippine heritage continues to thrive.



Follow us on social media





CARL THE JEWELLER

Rockwell, Makati
@ctj_carlthjeweller

Tatler March

158

Master of the Flame

Gordon Ramsay, a culinary legend, expanded his empire with a new Bar & Grill in the country



90



104



42 All Smiles

The Tourism Promotions Board Philippines celebrated its growth and global partnerships, solidifying the country as a top tourism destination

44 From Tilda, With Love

Tilda Swinton opened up at a Chanel x M+ event, sharing her evolution from arthouse fan to global icon

DEPARTMENTS

- 12 Around Asia
- 14 Online Page
- 23 Editor's Note
- 24 The Guest List
- 180 The Last Word

THE SCENE

28 When Paths Align
Raul and Audrey Forés's story began as childhood friends until one summer evening at Antonio's in Tagaytay, when everything changed

34 Threads of Tradition
Ternocon's fourth edition at the PICC celebrated the

fusion of tradition and modernity in Filipino arts and fashion

38 Path to Fortune
The Year of the Wooden Snake brings wisdom, intuition and growth, setting the stage for transformation and abundance in 2025

40 Giving Thanks
GAOC celebrated its 2024 milestones, highlighting its continued leadership in the Philippine dental industry

102



Editor-in-Chief **Anton San Diego**
Photography **Mark Nicdao**
Words **Chit Lijauco**
Set Design **Justine Arcega-Bumanlag**
Styling **Maita Baello**
Make-up **Johnson Estrella**
Hair **Christian Bojo**
Photographer's Assistants: **Villie James Bautista, John Phillip Nicdao, Arsan Sulser Hofilena, Crisaldo Soco**
Styling Assistant **Chelsy Estrada**
Logistics **James Mayo; Dowee Untivero**
Production **Michelle Soriano; Johannah Reglos**
Location: **Shangri-La The Fort, Manila**



BVLGARI

ROMA 1884

2-03 THE SHOPPES, SOLAIRE RESORT AND CASINO, PARANAQUE CITY
UNIT 14, LEVEL 1, GREENBELT 3, MAKATI CITY LEVEL 1, THE MALL, NUSTAR, CEBU CITY

Tatler March

48 Ciao, Margarita

Remembering the culinary great, Margarita Forés

52 A Woman of Vision

Megaworld President

future of AI and data science in the country

66 Beyond Cinema

Passionate about sharing Filipino films, Karen



Salutan-Krukover founded EdukSine to connect cultures and foster inclusivity

68 Calendar

Follow the music this month

STYLE

78 The Wish List

Brighten up your wardrobe with a collection of colourful, artful pieces that are sure to make a statement

90 Dreams of a Desert Flower

Against Spain's wild, arid plains, we unveil spring's

boldest fashions—where intricate design meets nature's raw beauty

102 Watches Picks

New cutting-edge details to sleek luxury timepieces

104 Jewellery Picks

Show your love with the latest styles from the top jewellery brands

FEATURES

108 A Voice For All

One of two opposition voices in the Senate, Senator Risa Hontiveros's rings loud, clear and

Lourdes Gutierrez-Alfonso reflects on her unexpected rise, embracing the role with faith and lessons from her mentor, Dr Andrew Tan

56 She Leads

Explore how the Asia Gender Network drives collaboration and empowers women across diverse cultures

60 Mind for the Future

18 Erika Legara is shaping the



IMAGES COURTESY OF FENDI; MARK NICDAO; ANDRA VISUALS
COURTESY OF FERRAGAMO; ALEXANDER YEUNG



120



108



78

convincing especially when she advocates for causes she is passionate about

120 The Nature of Resilience

In a robust discourse, Jane Goodall highlights the transformative nature of hope and her unwavering commitment to conservation. Her compelling insights are a rallying cry, urging us to recognise our shared responsibility for the environment and empower tomorrow's leaders to enact meaningful change

128 Letter to My Younger Self

In these heartfelt messages, eight women share lessons they have learned and offer support. Each letter allows them to reflect on past experiences and encourage their younger selves to keep moving forward

138 Portraits of Brilliance

Mark Nicdao reveals the creative journey behind his works in the J Paul Getty Museum

148 Pride of Place

Where vision meets opportunity, Royal Pineda

creates a breathtaking sanctuary. It illustrates that Modern Filipino architecture can thrive anywhere, anytime

164 Best of Both Worlds

Port Tonic Art Center in Saint Tropez inspires artists with its Mediterranean setting and rich cultural history

172 Seventh Heaven

Antarctica, the inspiring "last continent," is now more accessible. Its legendary sea-crossing and untamed beauty invite us to embrace it with open hearts

Tatler

EDITORIAL

info.ph@tatlerasia.com

Editor-in-Chief **ANTON SAN DIEGO**

Deputy Editorial Director **ISABEL MARTEL FRANCISCO**

Managing Editor **CHIT L LJAUICO**

Senior Features Editor **MARITESS GARCIA REYES**

Associate Editor **JESSICA ZAPATA**

Special Projects Editor **MAC FABELLA**

Arts and Culture Editor **FRANZ SORILLA IV**

Gen.T and Lists Editor **SYRAH VIVIEN INOCENCIO**

Senior Features Writer **JOVE MOYA**

Features Writers **GABRIEL BOHOL, JULIANNA CABILI,**

CELINE DABAO, TOBIAS JARED TOMAS

Contributing Writers **KARLY COX, CHRIS DWYER, SALOMÉ GROUARD**

DIGITAL

info.ph@tatlerasia.com

Regional Managing Editor, Digital **JOANNA GOH**

Regional Social Media Director **PACHARAPUN TINNABAL**

Digital Director **DORYNNA UNTIVERO**

Assistant Digital Editor **ANGELA NICOLE GUIRAL**

Digital Marketing Officer **CHRISTOFER PALENTINO**

Social Media Officer **JOAN CHAN**

Tatler Dining Officer **LAUREN DOMINIQUE GOLANGCO**

ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Regional Creative Director **ADRIAN ANG**

Deputy Head, Creative Department **TERESITA KHAW**

Regional Art Director for Photography **ZOE YAU**

Art Director **MARIENNE HILAHAN**

Junior Graphic Designer **SHAIRA CATABONA**

Contributing Photographers **MARK NICDAO, KRYSS RUBIO,**

NOEMI OTTILIA SZABO, ALEXANDER YEUNG

REGIONAL EDITORS

Editor-in-Chief, Tatler Hong Kong **AHY CHOI**

Editor-in-Chief, Tatler Malaysia **LYNETTE OW**

Executive Editor, Tatler Singapore **DANA KOH**

Editor-in-Chief, Tatler Taiwan **SEPTEMBER LEU**

Editor-in-Chief, Tatler Thailand **NATTHAWUT SAENGCHUWONG**

Editor-in-Chief, Tatler Vietnam **NIKITA CHU**

Editorial Director, Tatler Kazakhstan **NIKOLAY USKOV**

Editor-in-Chief, Tatler Indonesia **JUDITHYA PITANA**

Regional Managing Editor, Homes **JENNIFER CHOO**

TATLER ASIA

Regional Content Director, Front & Female **RACHEL DUFFELL**

Regional Head of Digital Content and Growth **ALEX FENBY**

Regional Editor, Watches and Jewellery **AMRITA KATARA**

Lifestyle Editor **COCO MARETT**

Sub-Editor **RICHARD LORD**

Regional Senior Editor, Gen. T **CHONG SEOW WEI**

Digital Editor, Gen.T **VALERIE LIM**

Contributing Wine Editor **SARAH HELLER MW**

Contributing Travel Editor **JEREMY JAUNCEY**

Tatler Philippines is published monthly by **Lifestyle Media Company Ltd.**

Style Media, Inc, Consultant: Unit-1401, 14th Floor NEX Tower, 6786 Ayala Avenue, Makati City, Philippines
tel: +632 8814 0771 fax: +632 8812 0790 e-mail: info.ph@tatlerasia.com

Copyright ©2025 by Lifestyle Media Company Ltd. All rights reserved. Tatler Philippines is a registered trademark of Tatler Asia Ltd and is used by Lifestyle Media Company Ltd under licence from the trademark owner. All materials published remain the property of Lifestyle Media Company Ltd.

Materials submitted for publication are sent at the owner's own risk and, while every care is taken, neither Tatler Philippines nor its agents accept any liability for loss or damage

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscribe to Tatler Philippines for just PhP6,000 (local, Metro Manila, provincial) or US\$350 (international) for 12 issues. Call +632 8814 0771 local 125, or subscribe online at subscribe@tatlerphilippines.com.

Remittance to be sent to Style Media, Inc Unit-1401, 14th Floor NEX Tower, 6786 Ayala Avenue, Makati City, Philippines





Molteni & C

MOLTENI&C MAKATI FLAGSHIP STORE

7489 BAGTIKAN ST., SAN ANTONIO VILLAGE, MAKATI CITY T: (02)8712-1288 / (+63) 917 811 9392 BY MODERNBRANDS®

Tatler

Managing Director **IRENE MARTEL FRANCISCO**

ADVERTISING

info.ph@tatlerasia.com

Head of Sales **JOY ANNE TRINIDAD**

COMMERCIAL

info.ph@tatlerasia.com

Commercial Initiatives Manager **BIANCA ISABEL SORIANO SIMEON**

FINANCE

Finance Manager **NANCY GRACE T BARIRING**

CIRCULATION

subscribe.ph@tatlerasia.com

Circulation Officer **RANDALE CARDONA**

PRODUCTION AND TRAFFIC

Production Manager **LENNIE ONDRA**

TATLER ASIA

hq@tatlerasia.com

Chairman and CEO **MICHEL LAMUNIÈRE**

President **TAMARA LAMUNIÈRE**

Group Finance Director **MANDY LAU**

Chief Experience Officer **SEAN FITZPATRICK**

Chief Technology Officer **JET CHOY**

Chief People Officer **MAGGIE SHEN**

Regional Business Director **STELLA CHAN**

Regional Head of Dining **ANDY CHENG**

Regional Marketing Director **NICK WILSON**

Senior Consultant, Regional Publishing Services **ANNE MOK**

REGIONAL CONTACTS

UK: AMANDA BENACHOUR
amanda@cranemedia.co.uk

Italy: PAOLO CASSANO
paolo.cassano@kmedianet.com

Switzerland: NEIL SARTORI
neil.sartori@mediainterlink.com

India: RACHNA GULATI
rachna.gulati@mediascope.in

Korea: JOANE LEE
dbi@doobee.com

Japan: MATHIAS BOUEE
mathias.bouee@mediakeys.com

Middle East: PRASAD AMIN
prasad@iasmedia.com

Spain: DAVID CASTELLO
david.castello@theinternationalmediahouse.com

Turkey: REHA BILGE
rbilge@medialtd.co.tr

USA & Canada: CONOVER BROWN
conoverbrown@worldmediaonline.com



From left: It took a village to mount this month's cover shoot with Senator Risa Hontiveros at Shangri-La The Fort; Margarita Forés on *Tatler's* January 2006 issue

A Tribute to Women

In celebration of Women's Month, we invite you to reflect on women's undeniable impact on shaping the world and on their accepting the challenge of continuing the work to be done. We are witnessing movements, power shifts and societal changes that reflect women's collective strength. However, the fight for equal pay, reproductive rights, safety and representation is still ongoing.

We are excited to feature Senator Risa Hontiveros on our cover this month! Senator Hontiveros is a remarkable advocate for social democracy in Philippine politics, passionately championing women's rights and tirelessly working to uplift some of society's most vulnerable, including women and children. She stands as a beacon of integrity and hope in a political landscape that can sometimes feel challenging. Her steadfast commitment to justice and support for marginalised communities inspires us to strive for meaningful change in public service. We deeply admire her dedication and the profound impact of her work, and we're thrilled to celebrate her achievements this month!

This issue also features an exclusive story on Jane Goodall, the world-renowned primatologist whose groundbreaking research on wild chimpanzees in Tanzania has profoundly transformed our understanding of animal behaviour. Now, at the age of 90, she remains an unwavering advocate of environmental protection, tirelessly championing animal welfare and promoting sustainable living practices. Our compelling article, *Letters to My Younger Self*, features heartfelt reflections from renowned personalities across various fields. In this piece, these individuals share their insights and experiences, which are bound to inspire and motivate you, offering valuable lessons on resilience and self-discovery. While

you're at it, check out the beautiful home designed by Royal Pineda for a young couple living in Tarlac and our interview with the Michelin-starred, the uncompromising Gordon Ramsay. We are also proud to share the photos of the dynamic visionary Mark Nicdao, whose five masterpieces are now on display at the J Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

Preparing for this issue, we received the heartbreaking news of Margarita Forés's passing. She has left an immense void in our hearts and our country's culinary landscape. Losing such a visionary and creative force, as well as a cherished friend, is truly sorrowful. We will never forget you for your culinary genius, warmth, generosity, laughter, elegance, style, love for your family, and pride in your son, Amado.

Last month's cover, featuring you alongside Amado, served as a heartfelt tribute and a symbolic passing of the baton. Your culinary journey has been extraordinary. You have pushed the boundaries of Filipino cuisine to breathtaking heights while inviting us to appreciate Italian food through a vibrant, new lens. The profound outpouring of love, shock and sorrow from countless Filipinos speaks volumes about your impact—a testament to how deeply you have touched their lives. Your influence knows no bounds.

We are extremely grateful for everything you have contributed to the culinary world and for your friendship. Your legacy will surely inspire aspiring chefs and food enthusiasts for generations. While we will deeply miss your presence, you will forever remain in our hearts.

—Anton San Diego, editor-in-chief

THE GUEST LIST



MARK NICDAO

One of the leading photographers in the country today is Mark Nicdao, renowned for his exceptional talent and skill. His printed works recently graced the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, proving his continued success in producing striking images and captivating visual art. This month, he captured yet another powerful cover star: Senator Risa Hontiveros (p. 104).



NOÉMI OTTILIA SZABO

Europe-based Noémi Ottília Szabo is a fashion photographer with Hungarian roots. Her style is inspired by Japanese fashion designer Yohji Yamamoto's saying: "I think perfection is ugly. Somewhere in the things humans make, I want to see scars, failure, disorder, distortion." She has worked with publications such as *Marie Claire* and *Numéro* and luxury brands such as Dior. She photographed *Tatler's* fashion shoot in Spain (p. 86).



CHRIS DWYER

Now based near London after 17 years in Hong Kong, Chris Dwyer is a food and travel writer who has been lucky to tell the stories of the people and places that together make the world so endlessly fascinating. In this issue, he writes about his jaw-dropping excursion to the seventh continent, Antarctica (p. 168).



PETRA HALLER

Stylist Petra Haller is based in Zurich but works around the world, specialising in editorials, campaigns and e-commerce. She styled *Tatler's* March fashion shoot. "During this shoot, I had the privilege of working with a dream team. Everything came together organically, thanks to the perfect blend of planning, trust and improvisation." The self-professed colour addict sees her work as painting pictures with clothes (p. 86).

SUSTAINABLE
COMFORT

DUXIANA®



DUX 1001

Experience unparalleled comfort with this iconic low-profile DUX bed, featuring dynamic two-layer spring construction. The DUX 1001 dynamic two layer spring construction is the perfect introduction to legendary DUX comfort and support. The DUX 1001 is based on the original DUX bed design.

studio
dimensione

One Parkade, 28th St. cor. 7th Ave., Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City
+639178406733 | +6387363728
studiodimensione@benchmail.ph
www.studiodimensione.ph Follow us @studiodimensioneph

MINIMAL by Studio Dimensione
GF Unit 1 & 2 BGC Corporate Center 2,
5th Ave. cor. 30th St., Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City
+639661832568 | Follow us @minimal_bystudiomd

The winning
entry of
Ternocon 2025
was created
by designer
Peach Garde

Raul and Audrey Forés
tie the knot in Italy,
conversations with
actor Tilda Swinton
and Megaworld's
Lourdes Gutierrez-
Alfonso, and HSBC
celebrates its 150th
year in the Philippines

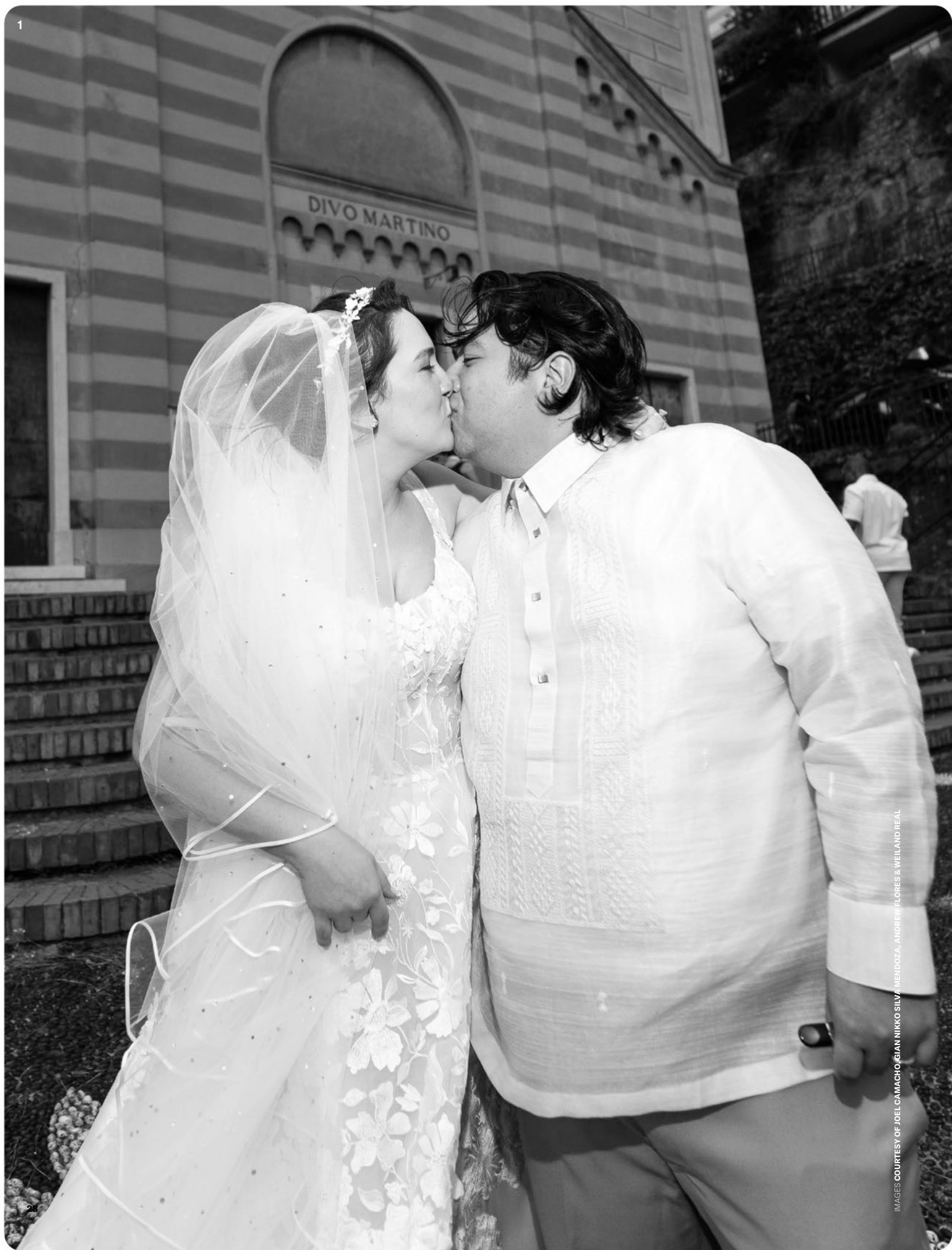
Tatler

THE



IMAGE COURTESY OF BENCH







1. Raul and Audrey Forés sharing a kiss 2. Pacita Brandenberger, Audrey, Aurora Charlie Brandenberger Forés, Raul, Dr Federico de Los Santos, Corito de Los Santos 3. Victoria Forés, Margarita Forés, Jose Forés 4. An heirloom from the bride's side of the family 5. The family of three with Oye Forés and Malou Montano Forés



When Paths Align

Raul and Audrey Forés's story began long before they realised it was unfolding. As childhood batchmates, their lives ran in quiet parallel—she always knew he had a crush on her, but he never made a move. Life continued: they remained friends, weaving in and out of each other's worlds. Then, one summer, Raul finally asked her for an evening at Antonio's in Tagaytay. Conversation and wine flowed effortlessly, but now,

there was a quiet certainty—this was different.

Years later, their bond had deepened in ways neither had predicted. When Raul proposed, it was with the same thoughtfulness that defined their journey. He chose her mother's home in Tagaytay, which was filled with family memories. That morning seemed ordinary—until he arrived, dressed sharply, with Audrey's closest friends on Zoom. Then came Heinrich,



his loyal Swiss Shepherd, bounding towards her with a small ring box attached to his collar. Raul spoke of love, of never wanting her to feel alone—echoing a childhood memory of her father gifting her a Saint Bernard toy so she would “never feel alone”. It was a full-circle moment.

“Technically, this was the second time I proposed to her,” says Raul. “The first time was less than two years into dating at Disneyland with a ring pop. I knew it was gonna be her all along.”

Married civilly in 2022, their joy soon grew with the arrival of their daughter. Yet, a church wedding remained a dream. In 2024, with their daughter in

their arms, they set their sights on neighbouring towns, Portofino and Santa Margherita in Italy—places close to Audrey’s heart. Summers spent in Switzerland with her Swiss father naturally led to family trips across Italy, with Sirmione, Verona and Portofino becoming treasured destinations. It was only fitting that their wedding would unfold there. As guests arrived, the air was thick with anticipation, the kind that comes when a love story—years in the making—finally reaches its most anticipated chapter.

If there is one thing Audrey will remember fondly from her wedding, it





6. The newlyweds with their guests **7.** Audrey with her daughter, Aurora, during the welcome lunch **8.** (Clockwise, from top left) Raffy Andrada, Miguel Tambunting, Edmund Reyes, Camille Reyes, Claudia Tambunting, Malou M Forés, Maben Andrada **9.** Buddy Garcia, Ria R Ojeda, Eric Puno **10.** Raul and Audrey cutting the wedding cake **11.** Kevin Zonnenberg, Anton Mendoza, Paula Telese **12.** The bride and groom with family and friends





13



14



15



16



17

13. Reyna, Rocco Puno, Christopher Payne, Jonathan Pisano, Joaquin Y Loyzaga, Quintin de Castro, Kenichi Cumagun, Jin Bae Kim, Enzo Garcia, Manu Gonzalez, Raul Forés, Alfonso Forés, Lorenzo Forés, Amado Forés, Jose T Forés, Luis Ojeda, Michael Fong, Eduardo Soriano, Nick Pratte, Christopher Soriano, Jonathan Fong **14.** Cristina Garcia, Rosanna T Forés, Bledes F Legarda, Michelle Perez **15.** Wedding cake provided by Grand Hotel Miramare **16.** Carmela Fortuna, Raul, Audrey, Amado Forés, Ana O Osmena **17.** Sonja Küssli, Julien Boulter, Audrey, Raul, Stephanie Montano, Mike DeGraef-Hicks **18.** Eli Antonino, Abba Napa **19.** Olivia Choi, Antheia Rae, Jasmin Wala, Dani La'O, Cristina Angeles, Audrey, Mercedes T Forés, Mia Ocampo, Ella Vargas, Yui L Ikink



18



19

would be when she walked down the aisle in a Martina Liana gown with her mother, Pacita de Los Santos Brandenberger. Meanwhile, Raul was accompanied by his parents, Malou Montana Forés and Jorge Araneta Forés. “When they opened the curtains and I saw our close family and friends all gathered, I thought, ‘I’m so lucky,’” she says. “To see and feel so much love—it was very overwhelming! But seeing Raul cry was the cherry on top.”

Ultimately, it wasn’t just about the wedding or the breathtaking setting—it was about the people. The couple is incredibly grateful to their guests, and they give special thanks to their parents Oye and Malou, and Margarita and Rosanna.

Threads of Tradition

Cultural advocates and fashion enthusiasts gathered to witness a marriage of tradition and modernity unfold as Ternocon commenced its fourth edition of celebrating Filipino arts and culture. The Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) transformed into a runway last January 26 to an eager audience for another spectacular celebration of diverse talent and craft.

First launched in 2018, this biannual event aims to immortalise the *terno*, the Philippines' national attire, as a symbol of beauty and heritage. It also highlights

craftsmanship as essential in immortalising Filipino culture. This year, the competition revolved around celebrating fashion and visual arts, drawing inspiration from the works of 20th-century Filipino painters, sculptors and installation artists whose contributions have shaped Philippine art.

Organised by the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) in partnership with Bench, Ternocon 2025 featured a collection of spectacular pieces by emerging designers from all over the country. These ensembles were created to elevate





traditional Filipino attire. Some looks showcased the symbolic *terno* and *balintawak* [less formal terno in printed cloth] with a *panuelo* [a piece of fabric draped around the neck or over one shoulder], in addition to the *kimona*, a loose slip-over blouse made of embroidered cloth.

This year's edition is the first Ternocon competition under the leadership of newly appointed CCP

President Kaye Tinga, a passionate connoisseur of fine arts and fashion. "Art plays a central role in shaping our cultural identity, and fashion adds a unique dimension because it is accessible and interactive, connecting directly with the individual weaver," she stated.

Suyen Corporation Chairman and CEO Ben Chan also extended his heartfelt congratulations to the audience, expressing

1. Ben Chan 2. Bianca Umali, Ruru Madrid 3. Robbie Jaworski, Migs Pastor, Arnel Papa, Kelvin Miranda, Tim Yap, Alden Richards, Michelle Dee, Ton Lao 4. Bryan Peralta, Kaye Tinga, Liza Araneta-Marcos, Peach Garde, Ben Chan, Ram Silva, Windell Madis 5. Melba Eduardo Solidum, Alice Eduardo, Irene Marcos-Araneta 6. Pacita Longos Medal awardee Peach Garde 7. Bryan Peralta's collection on the runway at Ternocon 2025 8. Dawn Zulueta



pride in the finalists' contributions to the evolution of the national dress. He described Ternocon as "Our *panata* [vow] to the Philippines." "This event is close to our hearts as it honours our parents Chan Lib and See Ying, whose legacy is etched in the drawing of a Filipina wearing a terno on the packaging of the humble *garwgarw* [starch] used to preserve [the garment]. This is a business they established in 1946, emerging from the ruins of war. They named it Liwayway, meaning 'dawn', to symbolise the start of a new day and a new hope for the country."

Each participant presented a capsule three-piece collection: a formal *terno* with a *panuelo*; a formal *balintawak* with an *alampay* [neck scarf usually embroidered] and *tapis* [short wraparound skirt worn over the long *balintawak* or the checkered skirt *patadyong*]; and a

formal *kimona* paired with an *alampay* and *patadyong*. They were guided by chief mentor and celebrated couturier Inno Sotto, as well as mentors Rhett Eala, Lulu Tan-Gan, and Ezra Santos—all established and influential designers in their own right. The evening started on an emotional high as Sotto was serenaded by a choir and crowned with a wreath of sampaguita, a touching tribute to his contributions to Filipino fashion.

A total of 12 finalists were selected, representing different regions across the Philippines: Bryan Peralta (Makati City), Patrick Lazol (Tarlac), Windell Madis (Ilocos Norte), Jared Servano (South Cotabato), Peach Garde (Capiz), Geom Hernandez (Batangas), Ram Silva (Iloilo), Jema Gamer (La Union), Irene Subang (Negros Occidental), Nina Gatan (Quezon City), Koko Gonzalez (Mandaluyong City) and Lexter Badana (Capiz).





9. Bea Elizalde, Mia Borromeo, Sofia Zobel Elizalde 10. A look by Patrick Lazol 11. Victorino Manalo, Inno Sotto 12. Frannie Jacinto, Marivic Madrigal-Vazquez, Millet Mananquil, Bettina Osmeña 13. Keri and Mayor Francis Zamora 14. A look by Ezra Santos 15. Thea Robles, Grace Gamboa Palaganas, Migs Pastor 16. A look by Nina Gatan



Garde earned the coveted Gold Award and Pacita Longos Medal for a collection that paid homage to architect Leandro Locsin. Coincidentally, Locsin designed the PICC, where the event took place. Garde's pieces showcased sculptural silhouettes, patterns, and innovative fabric choices, strikingly resembling Locsin's geometric oeuvre.

In addition to Garde's victory, other finalists

received top honours. Peralta won the Pura Escurdia Medal, or the Silver Award, for his designs inspired by Jose Joya's dynamic brushstrokes. Silva earned the Ramon Valera Medal, or Bronze Award, for his project that reflects Fernando Amorsolo's celebration of rural Filipino life. Meanwhile, Madis received the Joe Salazar Medal, also dubbed the Chief Mentor's Award,

for his interpretation of Hernando R Ocampo's distinct abstract style. "We find a continuation of an ongoing conversation, as [the participants'] collections, alongside the works of their mentors, create an intergenerational narrative on the runway," Tinga commented.



Path to Fortune

The Lunar New Year is a time of renewal and reflection. It celebrates life's lessons while anticipating the gifts of the coming year. The Year of the Wooden Snake imbues 2025 with the promise of wisdom, intuition and strategic growth. This auspicious year charts a course for transformation and bounty for all.

In harmony with the spirit of prosperity, HSBC celebrated its upcoming 150th year in the Philippines with the spectacular Lunar New Year celebration Fortunes Unfolding. Held on January 22 at the prestigious Shangri-La Makati, the evening was a feast for the senses that blended rich tradition with world-class entertainment.

The festivities began with guests savouring delectable treats before partaking in the Lo Hei Yee Sang ceremony. Tossing vibrant raw fish salad high, attendees symbolised the collective hope for abundance and good fortune

in the year ahead. The evening's energy soared higher as a dramatic dragon and lion dance filled the room with rhythmic power, embodying the strength and wisdom needed to explore what 2025 offers.

HSBC Philippines President and CEO Sandeep Uppal set an inspiring tone for the evening: "We are optimistic for 2025, as we are celebrating our 150th year in the Philippines in November. This year will be filled with opportunities for growth and expansion. We look forward to strengthened partnerships among our stakeholders, bridging our customers to a world of opportunities. We are also solidifying our commitment to the country by continuously supporting the Philippines' nation-building efforts."

Guests were treated to an opulent four-course dinner crafted by the culinary masters of Shangri-La Makati. From appetisers of suckling pig



HSBC

Opening up a world of opportunity

The HSBC-Philippines Story:

Ever-unfolding since 1875

Celebrating 150 Years in the Philippines



WORDS CELINE DABAO



1. Donnie Tantoco, Anya Katigbak-Cajucum, Jo Ann Camacho, Ben Diokno, Wick Veloso 2. Sandeep and Minal Uppal 3. Golda Roldan, Mary Buenaventura 4. Gary Valenciano and daughter, Kiana 5. Michie Melendres, Jenny Tienzo, Mads Caballero, Joy Cuaso, Anya Katigbak-Cajucum, Angelica Gana, Michelle Tan, Nina Almiranez 6. Sofia Zobel Elizalde, Raul Manzano 7. Odette Sumpaico, Rose Escoto, Elizabeth Quiambao 8. Irene Martel Francisco, Frannie Jacinto 9. Regine Velasquez 10. Ramon Monzon, Lea De Leon, Atty Roel Refran

and roast duck to a main course of fragrant baked cod in XO Sauce, the meal included a jasmine and white chocolate mousse dessert.

While the guests enjoyed their sumptuous meals, each bite was complemented by a stellar musical performance. The night's highlight was a dazzling showcase of Filipino talent that mesmerised everyone. Featuring The Voice USA 2024 Champion Sofronio Vasquez III, the ever-energetic Gary Valenciano with his children Gab and Kiana, and Regine "Asia's Song Bird" Velasquez, each breathtaking performance captured the legacy of Filipino artistry passed from one generation to the next.

Heralding the Year of the Wooden Snake, HSBC proved once again that heritage and modernity can harmoniously create an experience deeply rooted in cultural legacies while looking towards a bright future for all. Above all, the Lunar New Year festivities highlighted HSBC's capacity for building connections between people, which has been the backbone of their success over the past 150 years in the Philippines. The evening's seamless fusion of time-honoured rituals, exquisite gastronomy and world-class entertainment has undoubtedly paved the way for HSBC's continued growth in the coming years.





All Smiles

Gan Advanced Osseointegration Center (GAOC) remains at the forefront of the Philippine dental industry. In 2024, the company celebrated its milestones by bringing together more than 700 guests who participated in the dental clinic's journey.

The year-end event at the Solaire Grand Ballroom featured celebrity and employee performances, special annual awards and raffle prizes. Hosted by Robi Domingo and GAOC vice president for Communications Dr Abby

Robles, the programme started with a heartfelt message from GAOC chief transformation officer Armi Malaluan; she praised exemplary staff members who went above and beyond their duty.

The crowd included business key players Tony Tan Caktiong, Lorenzo Tan, Stanley Ng, Steven Tan and Philip Jun Cuazon, as well as celebrities Lovi Poe, Jasmine Curtis, Dolly de Leon, Rico Blanco and more.

For his part, GAOC Chairman Dr Steve Mark



1. Senator JV Ejercito, Lovi Poe, Lorenzo Tan, Jason Go
2. Dr Steve Mark Gan gives his speech 3. Marilyn Gan, Sunshine Cruz, Dr Pia Alaba
4. Tony Tan Caktiong 5. A scene inside GAOC's thanksgiving event 6. AC Legarda, Steven Tan 7. Jeff Ortega, Sharlene Zabala-Batin, Jasmine Curtis, Armi Malaluan 8. Atong Ang, Tony Ang 9. Cassy Legaspi, Inna Amari Parco, Mavy Legaspi



Gan expressed gratitude towards ambassadors, VIP guests and everyone in attendance for their unwavering support.

Gan proudly mentioned the prestigious awards the dental clinic received. "This year, our excellence has again been recognised with prestigious awards, including accolades from the World Business Outlook and the Asia Pacific Enterprise Awards 2024. These achievements remind us that our work here is world-class and leaves a lasting impact."

For GAOC's devoted staff, Gan emphasised, "To all of you—our dedicated GAOC family—you are the heart and soul of this company. Everyone in this room embodies the values of

hard work, camaraderie and commitment to excellence that define GAOC Group. I am so proud of what we've achieved together, and tonight, I hope you all take a moment to celebrate yourselves."

Reflecting on the challenges and triumphs of 2024, Gan assured, "To those aspiring to dethrone GAOC and our Group of Companies, I commend you for trying. But let me remind everyone here that GAOC is the benchmark. Through innovation, quality and hard work, we don't just lead the dental industry in the Philippines; we set a standard that competes globally."

Looking ahead, Dr Gan unveiled plans



for 2025, including a new and more impactful celebration through the GAOC Foundation Charity

Ball. This event will allow the company to reach even more individuals needing quality dental care.

1. The TPB's Love The Philippines photo backdrop 2. Susan Joven, Mia Borromeo, Ana De Ocampo, Carissa Coscolluela, Kaye Tinga, AA Patawaran 3. Migz Anzuers, Hanky Lee, Jeremy Barnes, Jorell Legaspi, August Samala 4. Kristine Meehan, Margie Duavit, Tania Fricke Lichauco 5. Carol Cabangon, Mark Gorriceta, Marga Nograles, Carry Gorriceta, Felicia Atienza 6. Paloma Zobel, Mariana Zobel de Ayala 7. Jet Acuzar, Vicki Delgado, Odette Pumaren, Jackie Ejercito, Weng Chang 8. Guests of the TPB's *Pasasalamat*



Giving Thanks

The Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Philippines gathered its partners and friends for a Thanksgiving dinner aptly called *Pasasalamat* to highlight its vital role in promoting the country as a premier global tourism destination in 2024. More than just a celebration of collaboration, the event gave guests a look at how far

the tourism sector has gone. In 2024, the TPB recorded PhP 11.3 billion in sales leads, a stunning 44.8 per cent increase from 2023. Its strategic partnerships with global media outlets and influential personalities such as American actor Timothy Granaderos, Filipino-American Hollywood star Nico Santos, Korean actor

Kim Ji Soo and American pop-rock duo LANY also resulted in over PhP 1.44 billion in media value. The TPB's participation in the Internationale Tourismus-Börse (ITB) Berlin and World Travel Market in London also resulted in combined sales leads of PhP 918 million—cementing the Philippines as a world-class destination.



5



6

“*Pasasalamat* is a celebration of what we’ve accomplished together through the invaluable support of our partners,” said TPB chief operating officer Marga Nograles.

The night commenced modestly with wine, cocktails and hors d’oeuvres against an exquisite view of Manila Bay and Laguna de Bay. Gracing the event were *Tatler Philippines’* editor-in-chief, Anton San Diego, Tim Yap, Ana de Ocampo, Mariana Zobel de Ayala, Kaye Tinga and AA Patawaran, among others. Theatre and musical actor Jon Joven hosted the event. He introduced singer Princess Virtudazo, who serenaded the crowd with lively Filipino songs. Nograles then shared the TPB’s recent accomplishments and the future of the country’s tourism. “Tourism is indeed everyone’s business. It shapes the world’s perception of our nation and elevates our image. We look forward to strengthening partnerships and forging new ones in the year ahead,” she shared.

Looking ahead, the TPB proudly announced its participation in the

World Expo 2025 in Osaka, Japan, where it will showcase the Philippines on the global stage. “This is our opportunity to share our history, culture, and interconnected communities with millions of visitors,” said Nograles.

A special coconut cocktail concocted exclusively for event guests was paired with the *Coconut Song* sung by Virtudazo. The night ended with a toast to an even more successful 2025, with everyone proudly exclaiming, “Love the Philippines”!



7



8

FROM TILDA, WITH LOVE

At an intimate gathering hosted by Chanel and Hong Kong's museum of visual culture M+, Tilda Swinton shared her journey from arthouse film enthusiast to global icon who champions both avant-garde and mainstream cinema *By Ahn Choi*

There are global superstars, and then there's Tilda Swinton. The 64-year-old actor is an artist—part of that rare breed that has won the love of global audiences while maintaining their dedication to experimental cinema.

When news of her appearance at Hong Kong's museum of visual culture M+ in January broke, it stirred a frenzy among fans and cinephiles alike. Her visit centred around a conversation with legendary Hong Kong director T'ang Shu-shuen, moderated by Silke Schmickl, Chanel lead curator of moving image, in which they discussed the critical importance of film restoration.

But it was during an intimate sharing session before the main event, attended exclusively by a handful of guests, including *Tatler*, that Swinton opened up about her journey—from being a member of an art collective to becoming an actor in Hollywood blockbusters, while steadfastly maintaining her artistic integrity and experimental spirit.

"I had the great fortune to become a practising artist under the guidance of Derek Jarman, a great artist and collaborator, when I joined the world of practical filmmaking as part of a collective," says Swinton. "He was my real guardian angel and remains so to this day."

Their pivotal first encounter took place in the 1980s. The late Jarman, an experimental filmmaker and artist, recognised a kindred spirit in Swinton, then a social and political sciences student at the University of Cambridge, who could translate conceptual art into performance. Their collaboration began with *Caravaggio* (1986), Swinton's acting debut, and flourished through



Tilda Swinton at
the M+ museum
in January

nine more films—a partnership that Swinton credits for instilling the experimental spirit that still drives her work today.

“You know, Derek was a painter, so he understood solitary work. But he made films for the company—and he sees it as a collective activity, and whenever he wanted more of that communal energy, he would initiate a new film. That gesture of companionship—he empowered all of us.” The creative freedom and absolute trust within the collective, Swinton reflects, proved crucial in shaping the artists they all became. “Most of us were art school kids. We weren’t coming from a world of what I call theatrical cinema. We were coming from somewhere else. We were coming from a sort of sideways side door, and he just gave us responsibility for whatever we were doing.”

The constant financial challenges they faced, Swinton adds, were also crucial in shaping her artistic independence. “First of all, very importantly, we had no money—and we didn’t have any idea of making any money. And I would even go so far as to say we had no interest in making any money. We really wanted our films to be seen. We were self-possessed enough to think that people might want to see Super 8 films blown up to 35 millimetres for 40 years.”

Not surprisingly, Swinton didn’t see herself as a professional actor then, a perspective that has endured throughout her career. “After nine years as a practising artist, I knew this was how I needed to work—not as a professional but as an avowed amateur. I knew I would need to seek out other environments where I could continue working in this way.”

The “other environments” turned out to be the many great directors she then went on to work with. Sally Potter’s adaptation of *Orlando* (1992) brought the young Swinton into the limelight, Tony Gilroy’s *Michael Clayton* (2007) won her an Oscar for best supporting actress. David Fincher’s *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (2008), Luca Guadagnino’s *I Am Love* (2009),

Jim Jarmusch’s *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013) and Scott Derrickson’s *Doctor Strange* (2016) further cemented her status, the Marvel movie officially making her a household name.

The effortless navigation between mainstream productions and indie work has earned Swinton a very special place in contemporary cinema: sprinkling mainstream films with indie credibility while lending indie films mainstream viability. “When the people came to me who wanted me to make their studio films—Francis Lawrence first with *Constantine*, Andrew Adamson, who wanted to make a Narnia film, and David Fincher ... they all felt like experimental filmmakers. They all felt like they were making experimental films. And in a sense, they all were. Those particular projects were adventures for those filmmakers, and that’s why I felt comfortable about going there,” says Swinton.

The human factor, Swinton stressed, is one of the most important considerations when deciding whether to take up a role. The question of a production becoming a box-office hit or obscure work for connoisseurs has very little bearing on her decision. “[Derek Jarman] always said it’s the filming, not the films. It’s the



process, not the product—enjoying it and letting the outcome be something perhaps different from what we initially planned.”

Forty years after her acting debut and inadvertent rise to global iconhood, Swinton is well aware that today’s creative environment bears little resemblance to the one she first encountered. “One thing I notice about young and emerging artists these days is that there’s a tendency for artists to feel isolated,” says Swinton. “There’s this strange mechanism whereby once you begin to have a profile on the landscape, somehow the culture

Clockwise, from above: Tilda Swinton in Olivier Saillard’s performance art piece *Embodying Pasolini*; Swinton at the M+ museum; A still from Swinton’s acting debut *Caravaggio*



encourages you to cut yourself off and go solo—even though almost everybody starts out as a collective being. That, I think, is something we have to make sure we support artists in knowing: that it's not the only way. It really means that people who don't want to be solo artists can feel they can go on."

This perhaps explains her involvement across diverse artistic fields, where creative cross-pollination flourishes and fosters a deeper sense of community. Among her most memorable artistic ventures was *The Maybe*, a 1995 collaboration with British artist Cornelia Parker at the Serpentine Gallery, where Swinton spent eight

projects, Swinton's artistic sensibility remains deeply rooted in cinema's rich history. "I was very privileged last November to be in London at the BFI Film Festival," Swinton recalls. "There was a retrospective of the great Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, two of my favourite filmmakers, and a silver nitrate print of [1947 film] *Black Narcissus* was shown. It was so thrilling. It was like there was a tiger in the room—this feeling of danger and fragility and preciousness, coming from the archive but as fresh as the day."

This reverence for film history informs her expansive view of the medium's future. She is a

in the actual process of filmmaking and the grain of filmmaking—it's just more and more riches."

A graduate in social and political sciences, it is not surprising that Swinton, asked about the future of film and creativity, offers a perspective that goes beyond artistic concerns. "You know, this is going to sound like a very transgressive thing to say, but I say it today—I think we need to be more sober now," she reflects. "We have to get real and we have to cherish what's really important, and I'm exhilarated by that. It's like there's no more nonsense. We can't waste any more time or energy or resources on things that don't really nourish us.

"I think we need to be more sober now. We have to get real and we have to cherish what's really important"

hours sleeping in a glass box. This pioneering spirit continued into recent years with Olivier Saillard's performance art piece *Embodying Pasolini*, which premiered in Rome in 2021 and travelled to Taipei last year.

"We find a lot of joy in this interdisciplinary approach, where architecture, design, moving image, visual art all can come together," says Swinton. "Collaborations often really have to do with this desire to share and to open yourself up, to take some risks, to let other people into your life, into your project. You can't fully control it but it will grow into something larger than yourself."

While her collaborative spirit drives her forward-looking

firm believer in all approaches to filmmaking, from century-old techniques to digital formats. "There's talk of certain formats becoming obsolete, but no camera is yet extinct. We can still work with the Bolex [a brand of camera popular from the late 1920s]. We can still work with glass painting [a film technique where artists create painted backgrounds that seamlessly blend with live-action footage to create impossible or cost-prohibitive environments]. We can still work, if we try, with three-strip Technicolor [one of the earliest colourisation processes] if we can find it—nothing needs to actually die.

"We're just adding options to the basket, and that I think is really thrilling for anybody who's interested

That's sort of a ponderous thing to say but I really do feel cleansed by that. And I feel I'm not alone."

She's definitely hopeful, and particularly inspired by the next generation of creators, including her own children, 27-year-old twins Honor and Xavier. "They are an extraordinary generation. It's bombastic to talk about a generation like that but they are so equipped and so clear-eyed. I have all faith in them, so I'm looking forward to their new work."





Shot in Lusso, Margarita Forés graced *Tatler's* February 2025 cover story
Opposite page: Margarita in *Tatler's* May 2021 issue

Ciao, Margarita

With deep sadness, we bid farewell to Margarita Forés, a culinary genius whose vibrant spirit and boundless creativity inspired many. Her remarkable talent transformed the F&B world, leaving an indelible mark that will resonate in our hearts forever. Her legacy will continue to influence generations to come

By Chit L Lijauco

Her story starts not in the kitchen but in front of the cameras as a fashion plate. The young Forés was the signature model of the discontinued fashion brand Sari-Sari, and a favourite of editors and photographers, especially when she donned the classic clothes of her mother, Baby Araneta Forés, a style icon.

She first graced the cover of *Tatler* in its second issue in 2001, standing out as one of Inno Sotto's five illustrious muses. In January 2006, she made headlines with one of the most striking and memorable images in the country's publishing history—a stunning cover titled *Margarita with the Lobster*. The photograph, expertly captured by the talented Mark Nicdao and artfully styled by Michael Salientes, quickly garnered acclaim and admiration for its bold composition. Following this iconic moment, she continued to shine in several group shots as one of *Tatler*'s muses, further solidifying her status in fashion and style. Her contributions were celebrated when she received the prestigious award for Asia's most stylish and creative force at the Tatler Ball, marking her as a true icon of elegance and innovation.

But food to the younger Forés was more alluring, intoxicating and challenging. She began with a catering business, which she called Cibo di M, and followed this with a floralscapes shop called Fiori di Marghi to complement the former. Finally, in 1997, she opened her first branch of Cibo restaurant in what was Glorietta 3 then. Through Cibo, she introduced good Italian cuisine at affordable rates, and her love for Italy's dishes captured the national palate. Her influence was significant, spicing up her continuing saga by prolifically dishing out new ideas. In that early stage, however, she cautioned the editors not to call her



a “chef” because she did not have a degree in culinary arts, even if she went under the tutelage of four Italian chefs in Italy for four months before opening Cibo. She also requested that her name be written in the articles as “Margarita” and not “Gaita” anymore. All her wishes were granted, for she had shown credibility and authenticity in every step she made.

Her food empire blossomed magnificently. Cibo, which already boasts an impressive number of branches as of February 2025, paved the way for other culinary ventures like Lusso, Grace Park and Alta. She captivated audiences with her television appearances, seamlessly transitioning between guest spots and hosting duties. During the pandemic, she ingeniously adapted her



Margarita and the Lobster as seen on Tatler's January 2006 cover

Opposite page: Margarita dons a pasta hat created by Mich Dulce

business model, introducing delivery services and expanding into frozen foods, a move that remains popular today. Over 19 remarkable years since the doors of the first Cibo swung open, the culinary landscape shifted perceptions. Once bound by their promises, people started to refer to her as a chef—a title she truly earned. In 2016, this recognition was solidified when Asia's 50 Best Restaurants honoured her as Asia's Best Female Chef, a testament to her extraordinary talent and relentless passion for the culinary arts.

Tatler was privileged enough to feature the chef as its cover story for February with her son, Amado, who is now also carving his name in the same world as his mum. The mother-and-son synergy was palpable. The mother glows in admiration for her son, who has shown so much maturity and work ethic that she wondered how

he developed them as she admitted she could hardly be called a hands-on mum.

She was a doting one if she was not a hands-on mum. At the shoot, she would tell Amado which outfit to wear for which layout. And which outfit to buy from the rack of suits pulled out by *Tatler*, complete with gushes over how it looked on him and non-stop reminders about the purchase. In his interview, the son did not mince words when declaring an opinion; however, when it came to a plan for their restaurants, he would always defer to his mother for the final say on the matter.

In that last chat with *Tatler*, Forés shared that she entertained thoughts of retirement—but not before the opening of her “signature restaurant”, Margarita, at Ayala Triangle Gardens. Since the news of her death, people have shared a photo of the black wall online with the word “Margarita” written in white; some wish for its eventual opening, and some wonder if it’ll open.

Social media reactions vividly express the heartfelt emotions of individuals from diverse backgrounds. They highlight her iconic ladle and distinctive black, or white, chef uniform, underscoring her significant impact on the culinary world. She will be remembered for her unwavering commitment to championing Filipino cuisine, genuine kindness, infectious laughter and signature elegance and style.

We will also cherish her love for her adopted cats and treasured pepper mills, her devotion to her family and immense pride in her son, Amado. She had a remarkable ability to touch the lives of many, and the overwhelming outpouring of love and admiration in the days following her passing has been truly astonishing. One poignant reflection noted that departing from this world would be a profound blessing, leaving behind a legacy as rich and inspiring as hers.

In her remarkable 65 years—almost 40 of which she spent illuminating the culinary world—Forés crafted an extraordinary saga brimming with thrilling chapters that narrate each of her innovative ventures. Her influence on Philippine cuisine will undoubtedly resonate for generations to come. Her story will remain a cherished part of culinary discussions, and her name will forever be etched in the annals of Philippine culinary history, celebrated and revered by all who appreciate the art of cooking.



Megaworld
President Lourdes
Gutierrez-Alfonso



A Woman of Vision

President of Megaworld Lourdes Gutierrez-Alfonso shares her inspiring business journey. She highlights the guiding force of faith and the impact of mentorship. She emphasises that authentic leadership empowers and uplifts those around us *By Maritess Garcia Reyes*

“The turn of events, honestly, surprised me. I didn’t dream of a new position,” humbly says Lourdes Gutierrez-Alfonso, president of Megaworld, recalling the moment she learnt she would take over the role once held by the visionary business leader Dr Andrew Tan. At that time, Gutierrez-Alfonso was already happy and content as Megaworld’s chief operating officer, and more so, grateful to have witnessed the company grow, having been a part of it for over three decades. But armed with a strong faith in God and the invaluable lessons she learnt from Tan, her mentor, Gutierrez-Alfonso gladly embraced the new journey.

What was daunting for her were not the functions of being president. “I had big shoes to fill,” she says, for her predecessor’s achievements in the business world were no small feat. From the ground up, Tan established Megaworld in 1989, and while the company grew exponentially through the years, it also overcame many challenges—from natural disasters to financial crises. “Dr Tan was the kind of leader who inspired us to persevere... He knew that better days were ahead for Megaworld. I chose to believe in his vision and

work hard to help bring that vision to life,” says Gutierrez-Alfonso.

SHE LEADS

As a woman who has stepped into such a high-profile leadership role, Gutierrez-Alfonso avers that men and women are wired differently and each brings unique strengths to the table. “Women are nurturing individuals,” she tells *Tatler*. With this in mind, she strongly believes in fostering growth among her team members while encouraging collaboration to achieve the best results. Women’s ability to juggle various responsibilities is also a key asset in leadership. “Balancing multiple priorities promotes increased agility and adaptability in the organisation,” she adds. These views, paired with a culture of meritocracy, paved the way for her success despite potential gender biases in the industry.

Gutierrez-Alfonso also shed light on the common misconception that women leaders must choose between their careers and their families. “I don’t believe we have to make that choice or that we have to give up one for the other. We love our families, and they are why we work so hard and strive to succeed,”

she says. “As women climb the corporate ladder, as it becomes more commonplace to find women in the boardroom, our families will embrace this dynamic, and their support will be invaluable to our continued success...I [also] believe that all career women are a credit to the workforce.”

TEAMWORK IS KEY

When Gutierrez-Alfonso assumed the presidency at Megaworld last year, she first implemented the thought leadership programme, President’s Conversation, or PresCon, which envisioned improving business through people engagement. Prescon enables her to converse with different groups of 40 to 50 employees, share the company’s story with them and how it triumphed over adversity. More importantly, it serves as a platform for her to listen to the employees’ ideas and proposed initiatives. Similarly, the employees can also ask her questions. “I wanted to go back to our people...It’s a fun and laid-back part of the programme, making me feel even closer to them,” she says.

For her, teamwork is essential. As a leader, she has been pushing the practice of engaging with the team to generate new ideas and promote collaboration even before she became president. A township project, for example, is the fruit of a collective effort and ideas from different team members.

FAITH, MENTORSHIP AND HARD WORK

Gutierrez-Alfonso was quick to answer when asked who her mentors are: Jesus, her parents

and Tan. “Our Lord Jesus Christ taught me to lead, love and live like Him. It is through Him that I lead with a HEART,” she says. H stands for humility, E for empowerment, A for accountability, R for relational connections, and T for a thankful heart. “God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble. Empowerment is an extension of humility because when you empower others, you also recognise your limitations. Empowerment means you are open to new ideas and are willing to listen to others. It also means you can trust the team,” Gutierrez-Alfonso explains. She also emphasised that the quality of one’s life is heavily impacted by



the quality of one’s relationships with others. “We must strive to build harmony because it builds a better team, and our everyday work is elevated.”

In addition, Gutierrez-Alfonso credits her parents for instilling in her the values of gratitude, joy, fulfillment, sacrifice and service, and hard work over self-entitlement. “We celebrated the value of hard work because my parents made it look easy and worthwhile, and we never once compared ourselves to others or wanted what others had. Because of that, I approached my career

not with a sense of entitlement, but with gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity to work, be of service, and make a difference.”

Meanwhile, Tan taught her determination and resilience despite what seems impossible. “He is a visionary and can see opportunities in every challenge. Dr Tan is also the consummate example of a hard worker. Even during Megaworld’s early years, he truly walked the talk—he was out on the field as a salesman, a collector and a deal-closer,” she continues.

FIVE LESSONS

The lessons Gutierrez-Alfonso learnt the past decades in the

industry can be summed up into five: 1) We should be a good steward of the resources entrusted to us; 2) We should recognise that we will be accountable to the owner; 3) Success requires hard work; 4) It is not the work of one, but the work of the team that genuinely moves us forward; and, 5) With a higher purpose, our work becomes more meaningful, and contributes to a larger, more impactful goal.

Equipped with these philosophies, she is committed to training and mentoring others and championing meritocracy. “I believe that meritocracy will help clear the path for more women to rise, and it will give these women the opportunities and tools to honour their higher purpose,” Gutierrez-Alfonso says. “Perhaps my achievements can serve as a humble example to young women in the region that anything is possible through God’s grace and determination and hard work.” Looking into a brighter future, Gutierrez-Alfonso vows to challenge herself, aim to do her best and do better than she did the day before.

Gutierrez-Alfonso is one of the pioneer employees at Megaworld, joining the company in 1990;
Opposite page: Gutierrez-Alfonso with Dr Andrew Tan and Kevin Tan



She Leads

Explore how the Asia Gender Network fosters collaboration and drives transformative initiatives for women in Asia's diverse cultural contexts. This network amplifies voices, creating meaningful change in communities

By Celine Dabao.

Photography Ian Santos

Female empowerment thrives where vision and community unite. The Asia Gender Network (AGN), spearheaded by the Asian Venture Philanthropy Network (AVPN), has anchored its mission on this philosophy, creating a vibrant community of changemakers working towards sustainable change for women and girls across Asia. By fostering collaboration and leveraging each member's unique strengths, AGN mobilises financial, intellectual and human resources to address critical gender equity challenges in the region. This vision was at the heart of the recent gathering hosted by *Tatler* Philippines and AGN, which convened leaders committed to advancing this impactful cause.

Expressing her gratitude at the event, AVPN CEO Naina Subberwal Batra said, "AVPN Asia Gender



Esteemed guests
with Tatler
Philippines'
managing director
Irene Martel
Francisco and the
AVPN Asia Gender
Network team



Naina Subberwal
Batra delivering her
opening remarks



Network was designed to bring women philanthropists from across Asia together to highlight how women's economic empowerment is good, not just for society, but also for the growth of economies of the different countries".

A fireside chat focused on women's affairs in the Philippines followed, featuring Batra, DSWD Undersecretary Emmeline Villar and Lopez Group Foundation's Mercedes "Cedie" Lopez Vargas. "The Philippines has been widely regarded as one of the top legal protectors of women's rights," said Usec Villar. "But when we look at the implementation, we're very poor in enforcing these laws because of women's lack of representation in the decision-making bodies."

This started a thought-provoking exchange among the

panellists, who explained the cultural norms perpetuating violence against women. Nonetheless, Vargas urged the women to hone their strengths to achieve long-lasting change. "Understand your leadership style. Use empathy and soft power in your family, workplace and community to achieve lasting impact," she encouraged.

Building on Vargas's point, lifestyle journalist and wellness podcast host Stephanie Zubiri emphasised the importance of women having a strong sense of self-worth before initiating external change. "Women often don't value themselves enough, feeling like they don't deserve happiness," she shared.

The lack of divorce in the Philippines and poor implementation of laws for

women often kept them trapped in abusive marriages or bearing disproportionate levels of domestic labour at home.

In 2022, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported that 17.5 per cent of Filipino women aged 15-49 experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence from their intimate partners. Mia Borromeo, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Child Protection Network, shared, "A high number of women who are abused stay silent because they feel that their income might be affected, and they wouldn't want to humiliate their family members or partners."

Cherrie Atilano, the CEO and president of AGREA Agricultural Systems International, Inc, discussed the struggles women in rural areas faced as their names were rarely included on the land titles. "We need to improve women's agribusiness acumen. Without that, they don't have access to training and financial support," she shared. A recurring theme in the discussion was the importance of allying with men in championing gender equality. For Tootsy Angara, whose work with ABS-CBN spans 28 years, the media and parents can work together to shift the narrative. "It's important to cascade the information we learnt here tonight down to the places we work in," she enthused. "Through working with teachers and parents, we can empower women from the ground up."

As the event concluded, there was undeniable optimism for women's rights in the Philippines. The guests left feeling energised and encouraged by the connections they formed with each other. For Batra, AGN was able to meet its ultimate goal. "If we want young women today to do philanthropic work, we need to connect them with Asian women to look up to, finding resonance in these shared connections," she said.

"If we want young women today to do philanthropic work, we need to connect them with Asian women to look up to, finding resonance in these shared connections"

— NAINA SUBBERWAL BATRA

Erika Legara is
pioneering ethical AI
and data science in
the Philippines



Future Forward

Erika Legara plays a vital role in shaping the Philippines' artificial intelligence strategy, passionately committed to fostering an ethical and innovative future for AI *By Syrah Vivien J Inocencio*

Throughout her career, Erika Legara has always been at the intersection of academia, strategy and technological innovation, contributing to the future of artificial intelligence (AI) and data science in the Philippines.

As the managing director and chief AI and data officer at the Center for AI Research, she has shaped the country's technological future through her work. Beyond the accolades and achievements, she has rooted her career in intellectual curiosity, ethical responsibility and a passion for cultivating the next generation of AI leaders.

Legara was captivated by problem-solving from an early age. She was always drawn to solving puzzles as a child until she began her current work. "I'm particularly fascinated by elegant solutions and algorithms that combine simplicity with powerful capabilities," she says.

This passion led her to a foundation in computational and statistical physics, which trained her to apply data, mathematics and algorithms to real-world challenges in marketing, urban planning and finance.

Her defining moment came in 2017 when she returned home after six years as a scientist with the Singapore government. "I was invited to design and implement the Philippines'

first comprehensive data science programme at the Asian Institute of Management [AIM], the country's premier institution for developing leaders in data science and AI," she recalls.

Spearheading the first Master of Science in Data Science programme at AIM, the country's first, she aimed to create skilled and holistic professionals who could combine technical expertise with communication and leadership. She calls them "battalion commanders," capable of guiding organisations through digital transformation and AI adoption.

The programme's success is assessed through the graduates' leadership skills. "We measure impact through multiple lenses: the calibre of our graduates, their career trajectories and most importantly, their ability to build and lead teams while guiding organisations through digital transformation and AI adoption," she explains.

As an academic inspiring young Filipinos to make an impact in science and technology, Legara offers this advice: "Focus on mastering the fundamentals—they're the building blocks that will support your entire career. At the same time, it cultivates interests and understanding beyond your immediate field.

The most impactful innovations often emerge at the intersection of different disciplines."

Legara's influence extends beyond the classroom to national policy. As one of two co-authors the Department of Trade and Industry tapped to develop the Philippines' National AI Strategy Roadmap, she played a pivotal role in defining the country's AI trajectory.

Released in 2021 and updated in 2024 to address generative AI developments, the roadmap is designed as a living document that anticipates future challenges while remaining adaptable to AI's fast-paced evolution.

One of her biggest challenges was ensuring inclusivity since AI is not just technological but has profound societal implications. "We needed to address both immediate concerns and anticipate future challenges in AI adoption and ethical deployment," she shares.

Legara believes the Philippines has a unique opportunity to become a major player in AI and tech. "Our greatest asset is undoubtedly our brilliant people. The Philippines has one of the youngest populations in Asia, with a median age of 25 years—a generation that's naturally tech-savvy and eager to innovate," she emphasises.

The World in Cebu

Bringing together flavours across borders and cuisines, The Mall | NUSTAR Cebu's lineup of restaurants is a haven for travelling foodies

Searching for just the right restaurant can be an ordeal. Cravings can change at a moment's notice, and factors like convenience can sway decisions. However, The Mall | NUSTAR Cebu is making the search easier. It hosts a veritable collection of restaurants that can sate any adventurous foodie. Combining a casual dining atmosphere with upscale, elevated interiors, The Mall | NUSTAR Cebu offers the world's cuisines right within your reach.



ABACA BAKING COMPANY

A place to relax, unwind and watch the hours pass with friends and family, Abacá Baking Company (ABC) is a casual dining place with comforting classics. Its baked specialities, flatbreads and pasta, made with ingredients sourced from local farmers, make ABC a beloved brunch destination. The salmon eggs benedict is a must-try, a refreshing twist on a breakfast classic. Down it with a cup of its signature coffee for a satisfying finish.

CAFÉ LAGUNA

As a family-owned establishment for over 30 years, Café Laguna brings beloved Filipino classics that we've grown to know and love and refines them to their utmost potential. This sense of nostalgia is the restaurant's focus, evinced in its interiors inspired by traditional Spanish-era homes. Try the chicken relleno, an oven-roasted chicken with a succulent pork filling that will remind you of home.





BARCINO

Spanish fare is beautifully complex due to regional variations, techniques and customs. Barcino looks to the north, offering a wide range of paellas, tapas and wine, which the area is known for. Blending this diversity with the Philippines' love of festivities and celebration, Barcino creates each dish as an authentic experience to enjoy with others, such as the paella pork *sisig* that marries these two similar yet distinct cultures together.



GOOD LUCK HOTPOT

Dining is an experiential affair that stirs the senses beyond one's taste buds. Good Luck Hotpot takes this to heart. With its striking, imperial-themed interiors, exceptional menu and live cultural performances, it sets the standard for fine Chinese food. Its Alaskan king crab is a fine example of what it can offer—a sampler of fresh crab with no shortage of visual appeal, a feast for the eyes and the palates.



KAZUWA PRIME

At The Mall | NUSTAR Cebu's The Strip, Kazuwa Prime infuses Japanese cuisine's profound, artisanal quality with a modern flair. Its elegant interiors match its exquisite offerings, especially when paired with an extensive collection of saké. The abalone is also worth trying, as its deep umami flavour and buttery texture indicate this restaurant's high calibre.



TEXAS ROADHOUSE

This American chain recognises that great steaks are hand-carved and cooked with passion. No shortcuts are taken to ensure that every component on the plates served is of the highest quality. The sides are made entirely from scratch, lending to the authenticity and excellence of every dish. Everything that makes Texas Roadhouse what it is can be found in its ribeye steak and grilled shrimp, served with rice and signature dinner rolls.



UCC MENTORÉ COFFEE + BAR

A newcomer to The Mall | NUSTAR Cebu, UCC Mentoré Coffee + Bar is known for its meticulous approach to brewing coffee and premium blends, which are almost an art form. The branch offers specialities not found in other branches, such as the ube oatmeal, a delicately sweet dessert infused with coconut. Of course, it is best enjoyed with drinks.

TAIWAN SHA-BU SHA-BU

Taiwan Sha-bu Sha-bu caters to all palates and appetites with a seemingly endless variety of fresh, high-quality ingredients. No two visits are ever alike, and whether you're after the soothing sensation of a warm broth or the tenderness of their proteins, you'll have no shortage of options. Remember, food tastes best when it is shared with others.





KOSHIMA BY NONKI

Koshima by Nonki represents the more relaxed side of Japanese fare and is known for its saké pairings. It also boasts an *omakase* experience, highlighting the excellence of its chefs, who curate a unique course of soup, sushi, sashimi and dessert. The vast array of textures and flavours leaves a lasting impression and an appreciation of the craftsmanship involved in its creation.



YEONWHA THE PREMIUM BY KAYA

Many flock to Korean cuisine's intense, assertive and piquant flavours, and for good reason. Every facet, from side dishes to mains and desserts, seems to take on a life of its own. Yeonwha the Premium by Kaya captures this inherent, impressive range and depth by utilising authentic ingredients in its creations. Capitalise on this restaurant's premium offerings by trying the striploin steak, imbued with unparalleled Korean flair.

*Find your next culinary destination
at nustar.ph*

Beyond the Frame

Driven by a strong passion for making Filipino films accessible to all, Karen Salutan-Krukover founded EdukSine to bridge cultural gaps, champion inclusivity, and overcome betrayals *By Syrah Vivien J Inocencio*

Karen Salutan-Krukover never imagined she would cry at a film screening—not from the film itself but from the sight of her audience. In a small elementary school in a far-flung town, people who had never stepped into a cinema watched a film about a woman fighting to keep her farmland.

“These are the people who do not have the money or time to watch a film in a cinema house,” she recalls.

That moment cemented her mission: to bring independent Filipino films to the masses. This realisation gave birth to EdukSine, a platform that makes Filipino films, mainly independently made ones, accessible to underserved communities.

Salutan-Krukover had spent years attending film festivals, watching the same pattern unfold. “Observe the people at the cinema,” she says. “It’s always those who can afford tickets anytime they want. You won’t see a saleslady, construction worker or vendor watching a film.”

EdukSine aims to change this. In addition to its affordable PHP 100 online ticket price, the Cinemasa initiative brings film screenings to rural areas.

“We want films to be inclusive of Indigenous people and the masses,” she says.

Salutan-Krukover envisioned a platform to break down barriers and bring stories to those who need them most. “The Philippines is an archipelago,” she explains. People in the provinces don’t have much understanding of other regions. But through film, we can connect.”

While Salutan-Krukover ensures that EdukSine remains affordable and accessible, she ensures that it is inclusive. “We launched ‘Inclusive EdukSine’ films with Filipino Sign Language [FSL],” she shares.

The special event marked the first time FSL was integrated into local independent films, setting new standards for inclusivity. “We invited the deaf community to watch, and they enjoyed it.”

Salutan-Krukover finds it frustrating how Filipino indie films were more appreciated internationally than at home. “Filmmakers go abroad, and only foreigners appreciate our culture,” she laments. “But the people in far-flung communities can’t even see it.”

For indie filmmakers, EdukSine provides exposure and financial

opportunities beyond film festivals. “Many filmmakers don’t know what to do next after festivals,” she says. Independent filmmakers also get 50 to 70 per cent earnings from block screenings.

Building EdukSine wasn’t without hardship. After securing a government grant, her closest allies supposedly turned against her. “My co-founders betrayed me,” she says. “They were building their startup using the same grant behind my back.”

One former co-founder, the only one with access to their bank account, allegedly transferred funds to her account and even forged her signature. Legal action was an option, but she moved on for peace of mind. “I entrusted it all to the Lord,” she says.

Her personal life also took a toll. While managing EdukSine, she endured personal loss—her parents passed away within a year of each other. She missed her mother’s final moments and, while grieving, was hospitalised in New York for depression. “It was incredibly difficult,” she admits, “but I realised others had it worse. Life is still worth living.”

These struggles reflect the difficult road many founders

Karen Salutan-Krukover talks about founding EdukSine despite betrayals and personal struggles



face—betrayals, health challenges and personal loss—yet pushing forward with their vision.

Even at her lowest, film remained her refuge. “In the hospital, watching movies daily saved me from despair.”

That love for film fuels her ongoing fight for EdukSine. She dreams of expanding the platform, not just in

the Philippines but also in Filipino communities in other countries.

Salutan-Krukover launched EdukSine in the United States in December 2024, with a film screening of Brillante Mendoza’s film *Thy Womb*, starring National Artist for Film and Broadcast Arts Nora Aunor.

“Film is the most powerful tool for learning about our identity,

culture, and roots as Filipinos,” she stresses. “I do this to break stereotypes, bring us closer and make us proud to be Filipino.”



Gen.T Leaders of Tomorrow is Tatler’s platform for young leaders shaping Asia’s future. tatlerasia.com/gen-t

MARCH

Music and theatre light up the stage for March

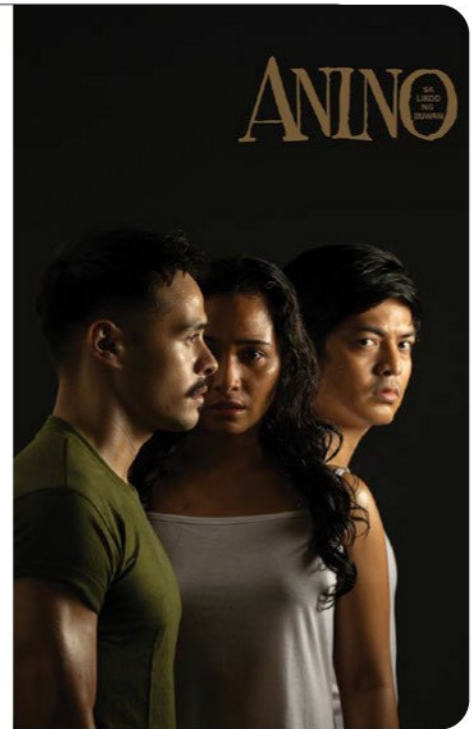
1 | THE ITCHYWORMS GOOD TIME SHOW

Returning from their successful Japan tour, the Itchyworms will again light up the stage alongside special guests, The CompanY and the Manila String Machine. Fans and concertgoers can expect to hear the band's greatest hits, such as *Akin Ka Na Lang*, *Beer*, *Di Na Muli* and *Gusto Ko Lamang Sa Buhay*. *Newport Performing Arts Theater, Pasay City.*



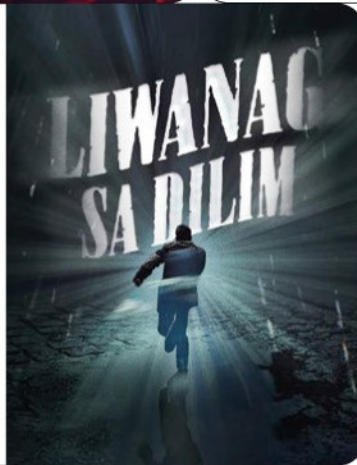
1-23 | ANINO SA LIKOD NG BUWAN

IdeaFirst Company's first foray into live theatre, *Anino Sa Likod ng Buwan*, tells a story of politics, friendship, love, lust and betrayal. Set in the early Nineties, the play by Jun Robles Lana follows a husband and wife amidst an armed conflict between the Philippine military and the communist resistance. *PETA Theatre Centre, Quezon City.*



OPENS 7 | LIWANAG SA DILIM

A new original Filipino musical featuring the songs of Rico Blanco and directed by Robbie Guevara, *Liwanag sa Dilim* is about an orphaned boy named Elesi. When his adoptive parents die, Elesi goes on a quest to find his past. Along the way, he meets Cris, who instantly becomes his friend and joins him in his fight to help the oppressed and underprivileged. *RCBC Plaza, Makati City.*



22-23 | MARVEL STUDIOS: INFINITY SAGA CONCERT EXPERIENCE

A film concert that takes audiences and fans on an epic cinematic journey, *Marvel Studios: Infinity Saga Concert Experience* covers 23 films in one night. Starting with films *Iron Man*, *Captain America* and *Thor* to the full force of Earth's mightiest heroes as seen in the Avengers films, fans get to revisit the cinematic universe's greatest moments. *The Theatre at Solaire, Parañaque City.*



22-23 | WANDERLAND FESTIVAL

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the Wanderland Music & Arts Festival promises its most anticipated edition yet. Themed A World of Wonders, this year's festival pays homage to Wanderland's decade of unforgettable experiences. *Filinvest City Events Grounds, Alabang.*

Art | Basel Hong Kong

powering the world of art

Art is *boundless*

Get premium
tickets



Tatler

Hong Kong Convention
and Exhibition Centre
March 28–30, 2025



Miao Ying, *Technomancy at Polarized Rift (detail)*, 2025. Courtesy of Galerie nächst St. Stephan, Rosemarie Schwarzwälder and Kiang Malingue

Lasting a Lifetime

Important updates and key information to keep in mind this month *By Tobias Jared Tomas*



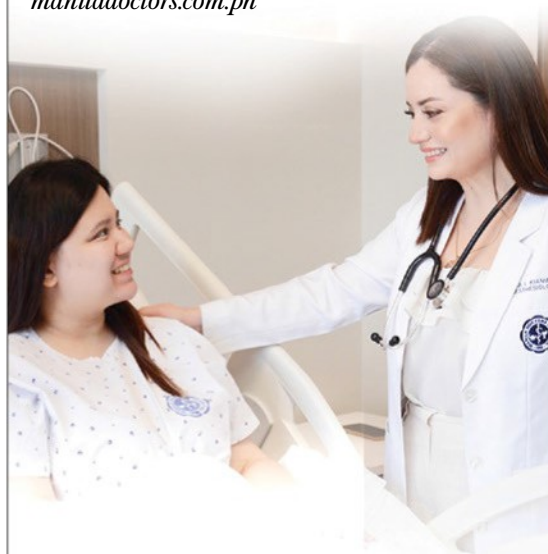
HEALTHY OPTIONS

The recognisable green apple scores a milestone as it opens its 35th store at the Greenhills Mall. The interiors, designed by French firm Stories, embrace the warmth and greenery of nature. Spacious paths guided by cobblestone-inspired floors lead into a space modelled after an outdoor market, where health and wellness products

are on full display. The self-checkout counters are a first for Healthy Options, allowing you to be in and out as quickly as a summer breeze. Mayor Francis Zamora led the ribbon-cutting ceremony welcoming this new branch, joined by founder and CEO Romy Sia and COO Belle Sison. healthyoptions.com.ph

MANILA DOCTORS HOSPITAL

Its promise of being “with you every step of the way” has been well-kept. Since its founding in 1956, the Manila Doctors Hospital has continuously improved on how it cares for its patients, introducing a wide array of services and healthcare facilities. It boasts four medical towers, 11 clinical departments, over 30 patient service units and a capacity of 300 beds, in addition to a cardiovascular centre and a cancer institute. maniladoctors.com.ph



VOLVO

The latest Volvo EX30 is an engineering marvel that is thoughtfully designed. This fully electric SUV has a charging time of just over 26 minutes, with a range of 253 miles. It collected several awards and garnered international acclaim at the World Car Awards 2024, where it was named the World Urban Car, recognising its unmatched versatility and suitability for evolving city landscapes. Its stylish flair has also earned it the Red Dot's Best of the Best award; altogether, it is a vehicle that captures aesthetics, performance and environmental considerations all in one. volvocars.com.ph



NEXT GLOW

Advanced Age-Defying Skin Regeneration

The first regenerative aesthetic treatment combining NASHA-SB technology and PLLA-SCA which provides biostimulation for collagen and elastin boost, with deep hydration, enhancing skin quality for a firmer, smoother, sculpted and youthful glow that lasts for two years.

avignon
CLINIC

Alabang · +63 917 1002 366 · (02) 8822 6321 · Bonifacio Global City · +63 917 636 8732 · (02) 8714 1992
Quezon City · +63 917 656 6988 · (02) 8442 8290 · Baguio City · +63 917 625 3500 · (74) 4244 2904
Website : www.avignon.clinic Instagram : @avignonclinic



More to Savour

A kitchen appointed with innovative essentials from Sub-Zero and Wolf is sure to delight all senses

The kitchen witnesses one's daily rhythms and vividly portrays the life and stories within its walls. From the practicalities behind how the space is organised to the purposeful selection of its gadgets and features, each detail reveals something about its keepers. The discerning home dweller desires and deserves nothing less than the highest standard, and for decades, they have placed their trust in premium appliance brands Sub-Zero and Wolf.

As Sub-Zero introduces two new refrigeration collections and Wolf debuts enhancements to its ingenious ovens, their shared dedication to elevating the kitchen into a state-of-the-art space continues this well-warranted legacy of excellence. "Our commitment to producing superior preservation solutions that offer dependable performance and innovative design remains at the core of everything we do," says Jim



Bakke, president and CEO of Sub-Zero Group, Inc. "The new Sub-Zero Classic Series and Designer Series are no exception."

Both deliver on the brand's unwavering promise, ensuring every

meal begins with the freshest ingredients. The Classic Series stands out with its iconic stainless steel exteriors, while the Designer Series offers subtle sophistication with its seamless, fully



From left: Fresh produce inside the Sub-Zero crisper drawers with enhanced humidity; Wolf Double Oven powered by the Dual VertiFlow™ convection system **Opposite, from top:** An elegant, modern kitchen with Sub-Zero refrigeration and Wolf cooking appliances; Organised interior of the Sub-Zero Classic Refrigerator illuminated by ClearSight™ LED lighting

integrated look. These offerings introduce users to thoughtfully designed features that are sure to indulge the senses—particularly sight, touch and taste.

Upon opening the new Sub-Zero refrigerators, the eyes are instantly drawn to the sleek stainless accents that match the timeless exterior. Every corner of the interior is illuminated by ClearSight™ LED lighting, reducing shadows and enhancing visibility where it is needed most—overhead, under each shelf and in each crisper drawer. This remarkable feature is unique to the brand and ensures nothing goes unnoticed. Sub-Zero's considerate touch is carried into the evenings, when the eyes become more sensitive to brightness. Perfect for grabbing late-night snacks or a refreshing drink before bed, the integrated night mode setting dims

the refrigerator's lighting by 90 per cent so that looking through the fridge is never straining.

It shouldn't take long to find and access what you need. The Sub-Zero refrigerator makes storing food effortless, with flexible shelves that can accommodate all shapes and sizes, as well as a flip-up dairy compartment. Each part underscores how the tactical experience of using this appliance is a pleasure. Located right where you need it, Sub-Zero's signature touch control panel allows one to customise everything—from lighting to humidity—with a tap. Also, a convenient sliding door now houses the brand's inventive, NASA-inspired air purification system, which scrubs the interior's air of odour and ethylene gas to keep produce fresher and crisper for longer.

This, naturally, culminates in the sense of taste. Enjoying every ingredient's genuine



flavour and peak quality—whether it's fruit at its ripest and sweetest, or a herb at its most aromatic and intense—is integral to Sub-Zero's mission. The new Split Climate™ intelligent cooling system keeps the fridge consistently cool, with two independent zones allowing for more tailored food preservation. Along with enhanced humidity within the crisper drawers, the temperature can be adjusted within two degrees to create the optimal setting for fresh produce.

Quality ingredients are vital to crafting memorable meals. This is where Wolf appliances come in, working in harmony with Sub-Zero to ensure those culinary masterpieces happen. The new Dual VertiFlow™ convection system

transforms heat circulation in the oven, eliminating hot and cold spots to ensure even temperature control at all times. This advanced technology guarantees consistent results every time.

With these premier brands, the kitchen is as functional and trouble-free as it is luxurious. Sub-Zero and Wolf understand that this space is the heart of a home—and through a seamless integration of technology, craftsmanship and design, they transform it into one that enriches everyday living.

Sub-Zero and Wolf are exclusively distributed by Focus Global Inc. For inquiries, call +632.8705.9999 or visit subzero-wolf.com.ph.



The Mini gourmet cone blends together Venchi's indulgent gelato with their signature Chocoviar 75% **Opposite page, clockwise:** Venchi's Chocoviar come in a variety of flavours that invite curious palates; The gelato takeaway box includes strawberry, mango, pistachio and Chocoviar 75%; Gift yourself or a loved one with Venchi's Chocoviar gift boxes

Veni, Vidi, Venchi

With over 140 years of heritage, Venchi is a premier chocolatier recognised for its exceptional Italian craftsmanship. By blending traditional recipes with innovative flavours, it creates luxurious confections highlighting quality ingredients and artistry

Versatility makes chocolate a time-honoured sweet treat. It is universally enjoyed, from classic bars to flavours of cake, ice cream and desserts. It transcends cultures and cuisines and has become an enduring subject of creativity. How else can chocolate be made, molded and utilised? Silvano Venchi (pronounced Ven-ki) wanted to answer this question when, in 1878, he purchased two bronze cauldrons to experiment with chocolates.

The Italian chocolatier began his trade in a little shop in the picturesque neighbourhood of Vanchiglia, Turin, where he created unique concoctions that have shaken the world, starting with their nougatine. He extended his reach by venturing into gelato, which has become a staple of the brand, seamlessly blending it with his other creations. One hundred forty years after its founding, the eponymous brand has taken place at the top of the world of chocolates and desserts, propelled by one of its bestsellers, Chocoviar.

This delight encapsulates Venchi's best qualities: creativity and the staunch use of only the finest ingredients. Made with its 75% *cuor di cacao*, Chocoviar exudes an intense aroma and impressive depth. Inside the dark chocolate shell lies an indulgent filling that comes in a variety of flavours. The ingredients make all the difference in elevating each of its variations, from the prized Piedmont hazelnuts in the Gianduaia to the Sicilian blood oranges in the Arancia.

Each delectable treat is enrobed in small, delicate grains of pearl-shaped dark chocolate that glisten like jewels. The interplay between taste and texture is exceptional, with each bite as pleasantly surprising as the last. The precious pieces are housed in luxurious boxes in mesmerising patterns or vibrant colours, perfect for gifting to others or for indulging alone or loved ones.



With summer comes the heat and the opportunities for the season's pleasures: family vacations, outings to the beach, trips to hometowns and the cold treats along the way. Venchi's artisanal gelato adheres to its longstanding Italian traditions, using carefully selected ingredients, which include the chocolatier's favoured Piedmont hazelnuts and Sicilian almonds. But don't feel limited; with more than 90 of their recipes, you'll have nearly endless combinations to explore.

Each speciality selection, from the pistachio to the plant-based strawberry and even the extra dark Guianduiotto, evokes the vibrant life that summer is known for. Bring these three flavours—plus mango—in

a Venchi Mix for everyone to enjoy. For parties and special occasions, you can take advantage of the Gelato takeaway pack, fusing gourmet indulgence with the joy of eating your favourite dessert wherever you are.

Venchi's arrival to our shores allows enthusiasts, connoisseurs or those with a sweet tooth to enjoy these sought-after concoctions. No bite will disappoint as each treat, from the Chocoviar to a gelato scoop, carries the brand's Italian roots, the inquisitive and innovative spirit of the chocolatier and a promise of delivering delights that will continuously surprise.

Follow Venchi on Instagram @venchi_ph and visit venchiph.com. Drop by their stores at the Podium and at Central Square Mall, BGC.



Max Mara outfit from
the spring-summer
2025 collection

Style takes us
to Spain for
this month's
spring fashion
shoot and lets
us in on some
exciting finds
from Doxa,
Tiffany & Co
and Fendi

Tatler STY



IMAGE COURTESY OF MAX MARA

E



THE WISH LIST

Everything you need
to look your best this
month *By Alix Lefebvre*

THE ART OF FASHION

Art has always inspired fashion, sparking iconic collections like Yves Saint Laurent's Mondrian dresses and Schiaparelli's surrealist creations with Dalí. This season, celebrate the melding of art and fashion with Vivienne Westwood's love of featuring rococo paintings on pieces or Mugler's bold partnership with Canadian painter Ambera Wellmann. **Clockwise, from top:** Yohji Yamamoto tie; Gabriella Hearst bag; Casablanca shirt; Mugler x Ambera Wellmann shoe; Vivienne Westwood dress **Opposite page:** Balmain outfit





A FIRST-CLASS DEBUT

If your fashionista status extends to your luggage, this one's for you. Bottega Veneta is stepping into the luxury travel world with the launch of its first leather-trimmed suitcase, The Odyssey. Designed to be the ideal cabin companion, The Odyssey is lightweight, durable and designed to meet most airline carry-on requirements, ensuring it will stand the test of time on countless adventures.

Bottega Veneta suitcase



KAWS-ED BY DIOR

The latest collaboration between artist Kaws and Dior has got us drooling. It's an electrifying mix of streetwear energy and high-fashion refinement, where Kaws' pop art-inspired flair finds a perfect partner in the timeless elegance of the French maison. The Dior logo gets a bold update, intertwined with a dynamic snake motif, signalling a new era of artistic collaboration. **Dior x Kaws outfit**



FROM THE HEARST

Sustainable fashion is no longer the preserve of crunchy granola warriors, and Gabriella Hearst is here to remind us that it can and should be fun. Having hosted the first carbon-neutral runway show in 2019, she continues to champion responsible practices. Crafted from Chinese cashmere and Italian silk, her new Celeus Knit Hobo bag is finished in a family-run Italian factory that meets the European Union's strict environmental standards, embodying her commitment to "honest luxury".

Gabriella Hearst outfit





CHOOSE YOUR CHARACTER

Forget following the algorithm: 2025 is proving to be a year of embracing individuality and personal style. And when it comes to your next It bag, express your personality via oversized silhouettes, whimsical prints or unexpected shapes from brands like Valentino, Fendi and Alaïa. **Clockwise, from top left: Fendi bag; Hermès bag; Staud bag; Balenciaga bag; Anya Hindmarch bag**



FAR FROM BASICS

Denim remains the ultimate answer to every fashion question; but this wardrobe staple is proving it's far more than just a go-to on indecisive days—think head-to-toe elegance from Ferragamo or streetwear edge with a Marni bucket hat. There's a denim style to suit every aesthetic. **Clockwise, from top left: Ferragamo jacket; Mateo cufflinks; Boucheron ring; Axel Arigato pants; GCDS shoe; Bulgari sunglasses**



BREAK THE RULES

Singer and Diesel ambassador Damiano David joined forces with creative director Glenn Martens to design the Diesel X Damiano capsule collection. This genderless line blends Damiano's rock-star edge with Diesel's rebellious spirit, featuring peel-off denim, oversized suits, daring maxi skirts and a raw-edged cape—pieces designed for those who dare to disrupt the norm. **Diesel** outfit



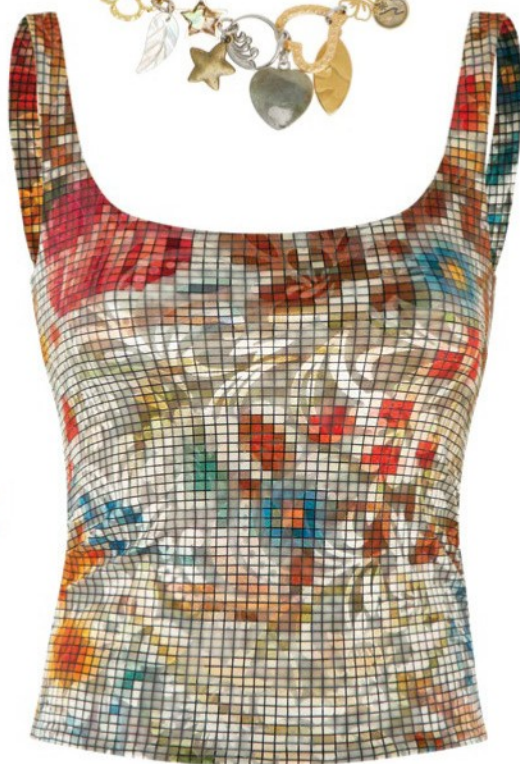
GARDENERS' WORLD

After Jonathan Anderson's playful take on the anthurium in spring-summer 2023, Loewe is again celebrating flowers in its summer-spring 2025 collection. As well as prints of a variety of flower species, lightweight chiffon dresses featuring wired hems and playful twists on crinolines ripple and sway, like flowers dancing in the breeze. **Loewe** outfits

INFULL BLOOM

Miranda Priestly might roll her eyes at spring florals, but let's face it: this look remains a classic in the warmer months. Let garden-inspired pieces put a, well, spring in your step, whether you choose one statement item or choose to festoon yourself in flowers from head to toe.

Clockwise, from top left: Bally bag; Marland Backus bracelet; Siedrés top; Dolce & Gabbana shoe; Leo Lin dress



SISTER ACT

Camilla and Carolina Cucinelli are proving that two heads—and two servings of impeccable taste—are better than one. Their spring-summer 2025 BC Duo Bag collection for Brunello Cucinelli blends family heritage

with cutting-edge designs and luxurious materials such as calfskin and suede. Available in a range of sizes from mini to shopper, the BC Duo is destined to become a classic. **Brunello Cucinelli** bags



PERFECT DUET

In January, Fendi added Stray Kids' Bang Chan to its brand ambassador roster. Known for his distinctive fashion sense, Chan's campaign showcases the maison's 2025 men's spring-summer collection, featuring its iconic Baguette Double and Peekaboo Soft Small bags. This collaboration blends K-pop energy with fashion innovation, showing how music and style can make a seamless duet. **Fendi** outfit



D R E A M S

O F A

D E S E R T

F L O W E R

We took to the arid plains of Spain to exhibit these spring fashions in the wilderness, celebrating the dichotomy of the exquisite detailing, novel shapes and cuts, and unexpected colour palettes against an untamed backdrop

Photography by Noemi Ottília Szabo. Styling by Petra Haller

STYLE | FASHION SHOOT



Fendi dress



Julia Heuer jacket
Opposite page: Yan
Jiang Studio earring





Pavé Pavé jacket and trousers, Carrano shoes Opposite page: Pavé Pavé bustier, Akris skirt, Yan Jiang Studio earring



Plan C outfit
Opposite page:
Hermès outfit











HAIR EMILIANO RICCARDI MAKE-UP CHRISTIAN OLIVIER PRODUCTION KATA JANIK, EYESOME PRODUCTION SET DESIGN POT SUN LIN CASTINGS MARIA PABLO FELIZ, TANYA KALBACHOVA MODEL J-MOON STYLING ASSISTANT MAJA COP



EDITOR'S PICK

If you've ever imagined the possibility of going back in time, Vacheron Constantin's new Historiques 222 in stainless steel might be the perfect portal. This modern reinterpretation of an iconic 1977 model features a sleek 37mm brushed steel case and a striking matt blue dial adorned with white gold markers. Powered by the in-house Calibre 2455/2, it provides a 40-hour power reserve. The integrated bracelet offers comfort and elegance, and is secured with a concealed butterfly clasp.

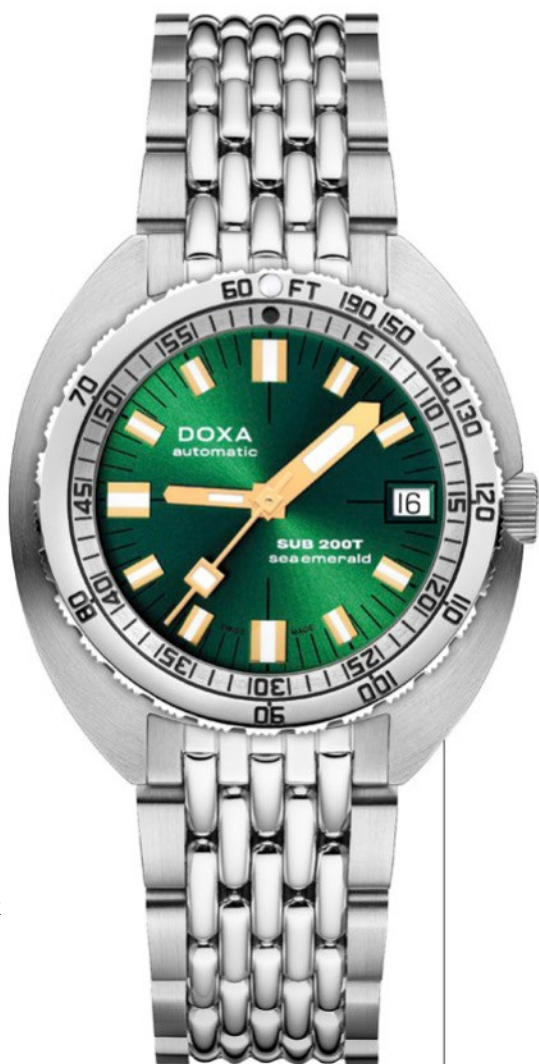


**Vacheron
Constantin**
Historiques 222

VIVID DEPTHS

Doxa is best known for its stellar diving watches, each stylishly modern, robustly made and delightfully colourful. The SUB 200T is in this mould, with a sleeker case at 39mm and 26 different variants. With all the technical attributes that have made SUBs famous since their introduction in 1967, this edition offers a choice of dial colours and finishes—Iconic or Sunray. You can also choose a rubber strap or the hallmark “beads of rice” bracelet made of stainless steel.

DOXA SUB 200T



STREET CRED

Powered by Seiko's Calibre 4R36 automatic movement, the limited-edition SRPL33K1 effortlessly blends an ultra-sporty character with a quasi-retro touch. It is, after all, modelled after a Seiko 5 Sports timepiece that gained popularity in the late Sixties. Part of the Japanese brand's second collaboration with skateboarding and streetwear brand HUF, the SRPL33K1 features the latter's signature colours, design elements and a bright, see-through case-back in “HUF green”.

SEIKO SRPL33K1



RACE TIME

The Pilot's Watch Mark XX Mercedes-AMG Petronas Formula One Team showcases IWC Schaffhausen's partnership with the renowned racing team. This 40mm watch features a matt grey titanium case, ensuring lightweight durability. The black dial highlights printed numerals and indices in Petronas green, complemented by luminescent hands. Powered by the IWC-manufactured 32111 calibre, it boasts a 120-hour power reserve and is water-resistant down to 100 metres. The



watch is completed with a Petronas green rubber strap, equipped with the signature EasX-Change system for easy adjustments, making it ideal for trackside use during the 2025 racing season—or any other occasion.

IWC Schaffhausen Pilot's Watch Mark XX Mercedes-AMG Petronas Formula One Team

EDITOR'S PICK



It would be remiss of us, in the Year of the Snake, not to highlight the release of a new Serpenti necklace from Bulgari. Coiling around the neck, this creation features five snakes, symbolising the five elemental forces of life. The lack of pronounced heads in the design maintains an unbroken flow—an infinite loop of serpents set in white gold. Featuring 42.94 carats of pavé-set diamonds and punctuated by onyx and 12.23 carats of rubies, the piece showcases Bulgari's mastery of goldsmithing, gem setting and, of course, storytelling through high jewellery.

Bulgari Serpenti
Infinito necklace

TRUE LOVE

A fusion of white, rose and yellow gold, Cartier's Trinity necklace is chunky yet imminently classy. The 43cm chain reflects the original design Louis Cartier envisioned in 1924, which has been reinterpreted today. The interlocked bands symbolise the intersection of unity and individuality.

Cartier Trinity cushion necklace, extra-large model

TWIN FLAMES

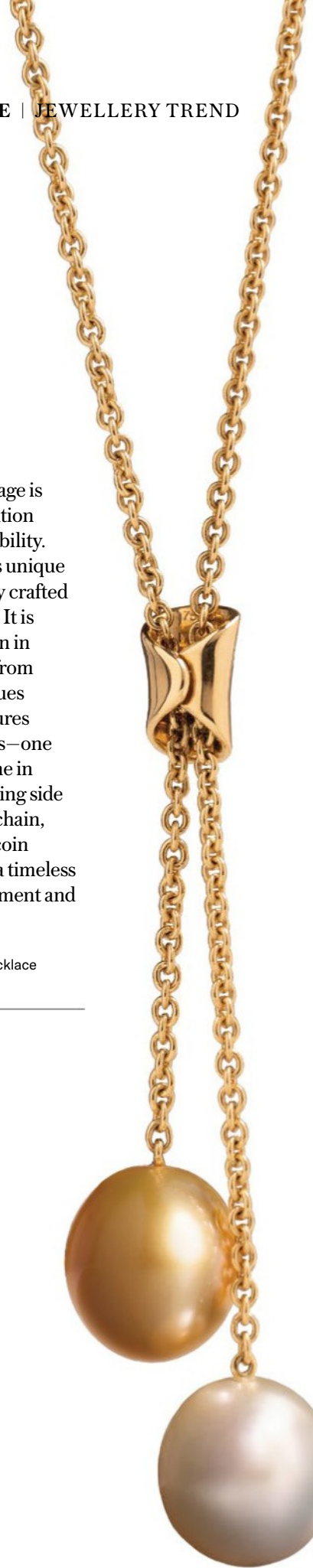
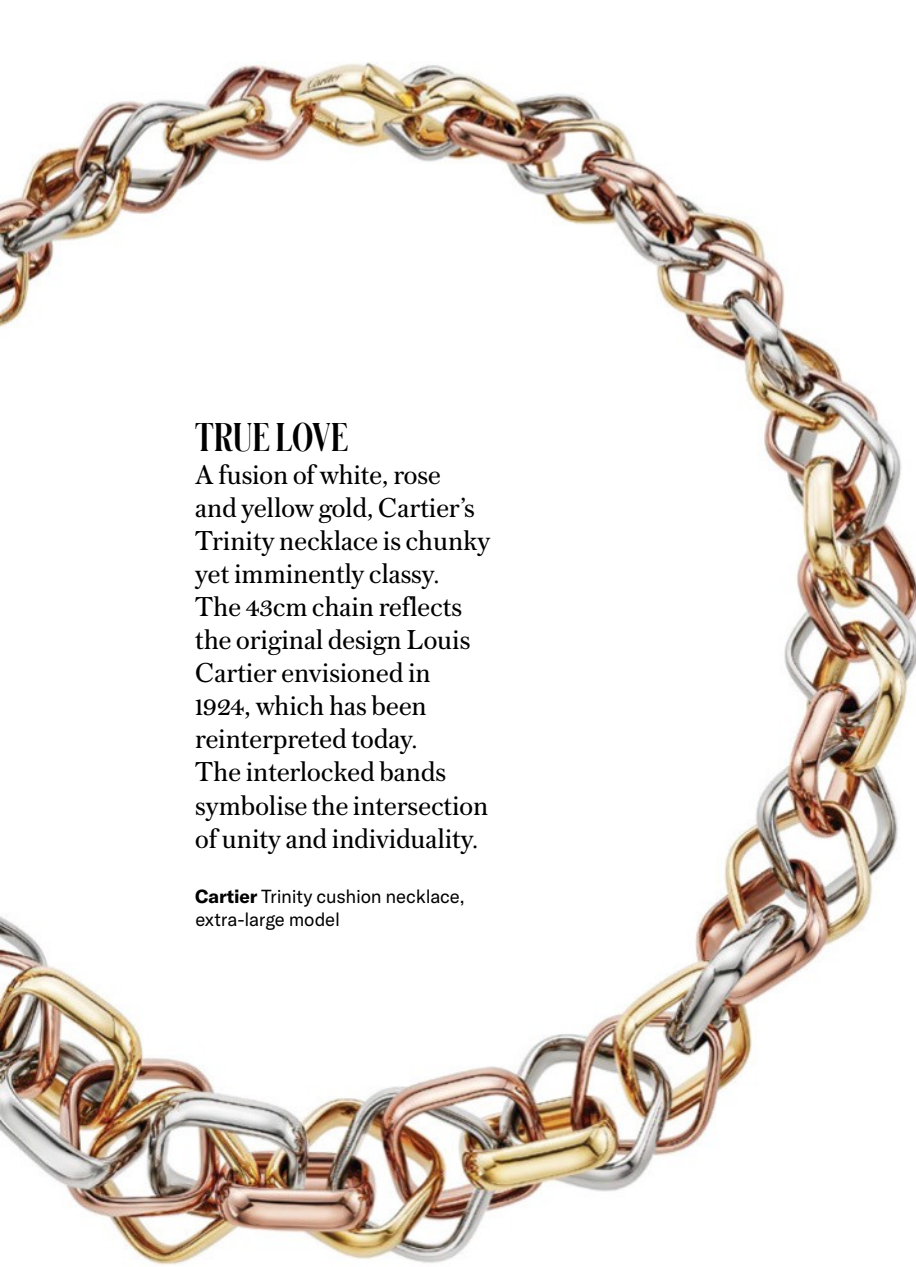
Jewelmer's love language is manifested in a dedication to beauty and sustainability. This is expressed in its unique creations, thoughtfully crafted and tastefully curated. It is quite a romantic notion in itself. Take this piece from the iconic Les Classiques collection, which features two oval-shaped pearls—one in brilliant gold and one in lustrous white—swinging side by side on an 18c gold chain, two sides of the same coin coming together. It is a timeless piece that will complement and elevate any look.

Jewelmer Les Classiques necklace

BOLD CLASSIC

A substantial alternative to the minimalist jewellery trend, the Tiffany HardWear earrings make a striking statement. Inspired by a 1962 archival bracelet, its sleek form makes for a refined industrial aesthetic and showcases the iconic jewellery house's signature gauge, an element that references love's enduring strength. These pieces capture the spirit of the sophisticated New York City woman—effortlessly modern and timeless at once.

Tiffany & Co HardWear earrings



An evening escape,
where landscape and
architecture blend
together to create a
calming sanctuary
under the stars

FLAT



Senator Risa
Hontiveros on being
a strong, passionate
voice for change, a sit
down with Dr Jane
Goodall and eight
women pen letters to
their younger selves

Tatler WOMEN

Senator Risa Hontiveros wears **Mosaic X Andrea Tetangco** top, **House of Laurel** pants, **Jimmy Choo** heels, **Love Rocks** earrings and **Tiffany & Co** necklace

MAKEUP: **JOHNSON ESTRELLA** HAIR: **CHRISTIAN BOJO** PHOTOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANTS: **WILLIE JAMES BAUTISTA**, **JOHN PHILIP NICDAO**, **ARISAN SUI SER HOFILENA**, **CRISALDO SOCO** STYLING ASSISTANT: **CHELSEY ESTRADA** LOGISTICS: **JAMES MAYO** AND **DOWEE UNIVERO** PRODUCTION: **MICHELLE SORIANO** AND **JOHANNAH REGLOS**



A VOICE FOR ALL

Senator Risa Hontiveros stands out in the Senate as a powerful advocate for critical social issues, including women's rights, healthcare access and anti-corruption. Through tireless efforts, she works towards meaningful legislative solutions embodying her commitment to a better Philippines

By Chit L Lijauco. Photography by Mark Nicdao.

Styling by Maita Baello. Set design by Justine Arcega-Bumanlag.

Shot on location at Shangri-La The Fort, Manila

Hontiveros wears
Rajo Laurel gown and
Tiffany & Co bangle



“Fun!” she mutters as she hurries to her third outfit change. Senator Risa Hontiveros is enjoying this break from politics, which has been nerve-racking since the new year, particularly for her. Just emerging from, but not entirely out of, the maelstrom brought about by her Senate Bill No. 1979,

also known as the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Bill, she values this afternoon as a welcome distraction.

But not distracting enough to forget the top item on the agenda.

“I’m so sad thinking of the prospect that the Bill will not get the support of a Senate majority,” says one of the only two opposition leaders in the Upper House. SB 1979 will require all schools to implement comprehensive sex education for students aged 10 to 19, from upper primary through secondary levels. The Bill was already approved by the Lower House in September 2023 as House Bill No. 8910; its counterpart is still pending in the Senate, where it is currently defending itself from a backlash mainly coming from conservatives.

“It’s a straightforward bill which became a victim of fake news that made it complex,” Hontiveros, its leading proponent, says, stressing the importance of supporting this legal document to address an alarming peak in adolescent pregnancies. “Since the pandemic, teenage pregnancies among 10-19 year-olds spiked by 10 per cent and among 15-19 year-olds by 9.7 per cent. But, among the 10-14 year-olds, the number has risen by about 35 per cent!” Hontiveros describes the dire situation with the numbers she must have repeated countless times. “Why is it much steeper in the lower ages?” she asks, and answers, “Because of the presence of abuse in the equation. Ninety-seven per cent of teenage pregnancies are caused by older relatives of the girls themselves or partners much older than they are. Only 3 per cent are close in age, the Romeo-and-Juliet types.”

“If the Bill doesn’t pass the Senate, then we’ll simply have to refile it,” says the tenacious senator. Though a delay will be a costly derailment to addressing a worsening problem, she is thankful she will still be around to refile it in the next Congress. Hontiveros will serve her last term in the Senate during the 20th Congress, which will be elected in May 2025. She would then have been a legislative body member for 12 years, six in the Lower House and six in the Upper House.

IT’S IN THE BLOOD

Hontiveros says she stumbled into her life in politics “by accident”. Yet, in her recounting of events, it seems that politics did not drop on her lap serendipitously, nor as a spark of one aha moment or unexpected like an accident. Instead, politics crept into her blood more by osmosis, immersion, or by a slow but sustained growth nurtured

in a family and a clan that are socially aware, politically informed and involved enough to make a stand.

She vividly remembers her first experience voicing her opposition to the status quo. “I was 12 when the 1978 noise barrage happened, and I joined my family in the backyard to make noise, banging on everything we can get our hands on. I was surprised that the noise was so loud and lasted so long and realised many shared the same oppositionist sentiment.”

Her recollection continues to the summer after her sophomore year in high school when her mother brought her to a Nuclear-Free Philippines Coalition symposium. That same year, the aspiring thespian joined the theatre group Repertory Philippines for the presentation of *The Sound of Music* where she played the role of Louisa, the third Von Trapp child, after which she was preparing to audition for Liat in *South Pacific*. “But the NFPC symposium so inspired me that coming back to school for junior high, I organised a group called the Nuclear Disarmament Group. *Di na ako tumuloy sa* [I did not continue with my] audition. *So ayun. Tuloy tuloy na ako* [This activism continued] until college,” she shares.

The events that emboldened her quickly unfolded one after another: the assassination of Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino, a civil disobedience campaign, a snap election and the people power revolution. “All that happened when I was in college,” she says. “I was taking Social Sciences, preparing to work in research, writing and teaching. But I stayed an activist all those years.”

After college, she started a promising career in broadcast media, becoming one of the popular faces on television who credibly dish out the news. “But I was full-time as well in organising work with the farm and fisherfolk associations, with the coalition for peace, and others,” she reminds us.

In the mid-Nineties, she helped form the political party Akbayan, which aims to fight for people’s agenda outside and inside the government. Akbayan was registered in 1988, joined the elections and won one seat in the House for Etta Rosales, the party’s representative. Hontiveros was, of course, always asked to run for Congress, but she begged off twice for family reasons.

“For the 2004 elections, I relented, believing that it’s time to walk my talk,” she says. After serving the House for two terms, she was fielded as a senatorial candidate by the Akbayan-Liberal Party coalition but lost twice. Finally, in 2016, she got elected to the Upper House. “Perhaps the reason I lost twice was that fate and the heavens deemed I would be more useful during the term of Duterte and of Marcos,” she assuages herself.

“I love legislative work,” says the Senator who has no legal background but wishes she had taken up law. Instead, she put together a great legal team and a good research team to discuss the issues she would advocate for or against in the Senate. “But many of the issues we

Hontiveros wears a blazer
from the stylist's archives
and **Love Rocks** jewellery





Hontiveros wears
Rajo Laurel gown and
Tiffany & Co bangle





Hontiveros wears
Rajo Laurel gown,
Love Rocks jewellery
and blazer from the
stylist's archives



“We already have such a huge battle outside of our bodies and our own lives. Why should we withhold all our support for each other?”

tackle are brought to us by our partners, the stakeholders themselves, the advocates. In practically every bill that we worked on, the concerned sector was the one who brought our attention to the issue,” she informs.

In her political world, there are undoubtedly a lot of frustrations that she has learnt to handle. “I breathe through it, breathing in life and exhaling love,” she reveals the technique she learnt during her short exposure to theatre. “The frustrations that I have to swallow, I think of them as raw materials, ingredients or building blocks to keep working and moving forward. It is important to hold our ground even if there are certain things we cannot win this time. We hold that ground for those who would come after us because, in time, I believe those advocacies will win.”

Hontiveros is very positive and can find common ground even with colleagues who do not share her politics. “As long as there are common advocacies, we’ve crossed the minority/majority line and worked with the majority senators,” she says. She cites the energy issues

and economic affairs with Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, children’s problems with Senator Nancy Binay and environmental matters with Senator Loren Legarda. She even has kind words for Senator Robin Padilla: “He’s delivered several privilege speeches where it was clear that he knew what he was talking about. He really studied. And we have worked together on Bangsamoro.”

THE SOLDIER AND THE ACTIVIST

If Hontiveros faces differences in the political arena, she must have faced them at home as well, for she fell in love with and married a military man. “I was in junior year in college when I received a letter from this Philippine Military Academy cadet who wrote that he saw my photo in my high school yearbook. Normally I’d get irritated by the letters I receive, but his was pages long, front and back of handwriting interspersed with doodles and a lot of stories, very conversational that I felt the urge to write back and thank him,” she recalls.

But she lost the letter and did not find it until almost a year later. She wrote back, and that started a regular exchange of correspondence. They became sweethearts, quite a unique union between two opposite mindsets. “But we gelled enough to decide that yes, we can be a family together,” Hontiveros says. In 1990, the activist, Ana Theresia “Risa” Navarro Hontiveros, and the soldier, first lieutenant Francisco “Frank” Baraquel Jr, were wed.

There is nothing she can think of that they hugely disagreed on. “Maybe because he was a writer, he was more broadminded? He also believed in human rights and social justice. He was very curious and open, which is rare among military men. But the few relationships I have heard about, of progressive women and military men, this openness in the latter is needed to make it work,” Hontiveros says. Baraquel died in 2005 from a heart attack, leaving behind four children for Hontiveros to raise as a single mum.

Her children, one boy and three girls, are all grown up now, with only the youngest still in school and one of the girls getting married in June. Though she describes them as all interested in current issues, aware, opinionated and vocal in their lines of work, nobody has yet expressed a desire to enter formal politics. “If one of my children will run for office, I will step back. We do not want to start a dynasty,” she quickly declares, rattling off several influences that may have had an impact on them: their being vast readers, family influence, their school, milieu, generation and perhaps a bit of exposure to her work as she would take them with her to office when they were younger.

Hontiveros wears
Carolina Herrera
blouse, blazer and
trousers, **Escada** scarf,
Tiffany & Co jewellery

Looking beyond her daughter's wedding, which she is so eagerly anticipating right now, Hontiveros dreams of the day "when we can elect a reformist government in 2028 and participate in a succession plan; and to prepare also to fight for not just one reform administration but two or three so we can institutionalise the reforms that we have been proposing".

ON WOMEN AND THE FUTURE

She would also like to see the opposition "fighting for all the positions up to the presidency" but is non-committal about the possibility of serving in the highest position of the land. "I don't know yet. I can say right now that, whether it's someone else or me, there will surely be someone from the opposition. This I am sure of. I will work for this."

How does she see the lot of women in the future? "Our biggest struggle is still the age-old fight for equality. We have taken many steps forward, but we still have a long way to go until it becomes natural for every person to treat women equally. I agree that we are in a better place because our grandmothers and mothers fought, but we have to keep fighting. Our daughters will have their battles," she opines.

In this journey, she stresses the importance of women befriending, supporting and helping each other. "We already have such a huge battle outside of our bodies and our own lives. Why should we withhold all our support for each other?" she asks.

Rating the Filipinas in this battle, Hontiveros believes they enjoy greater equality than other women in some countries, a fact they should be proud of "because they fought for that". However, she adds that they can also be inspired by women in other countries who are ahead and learn from and support women who are still behind in this fight for equality.

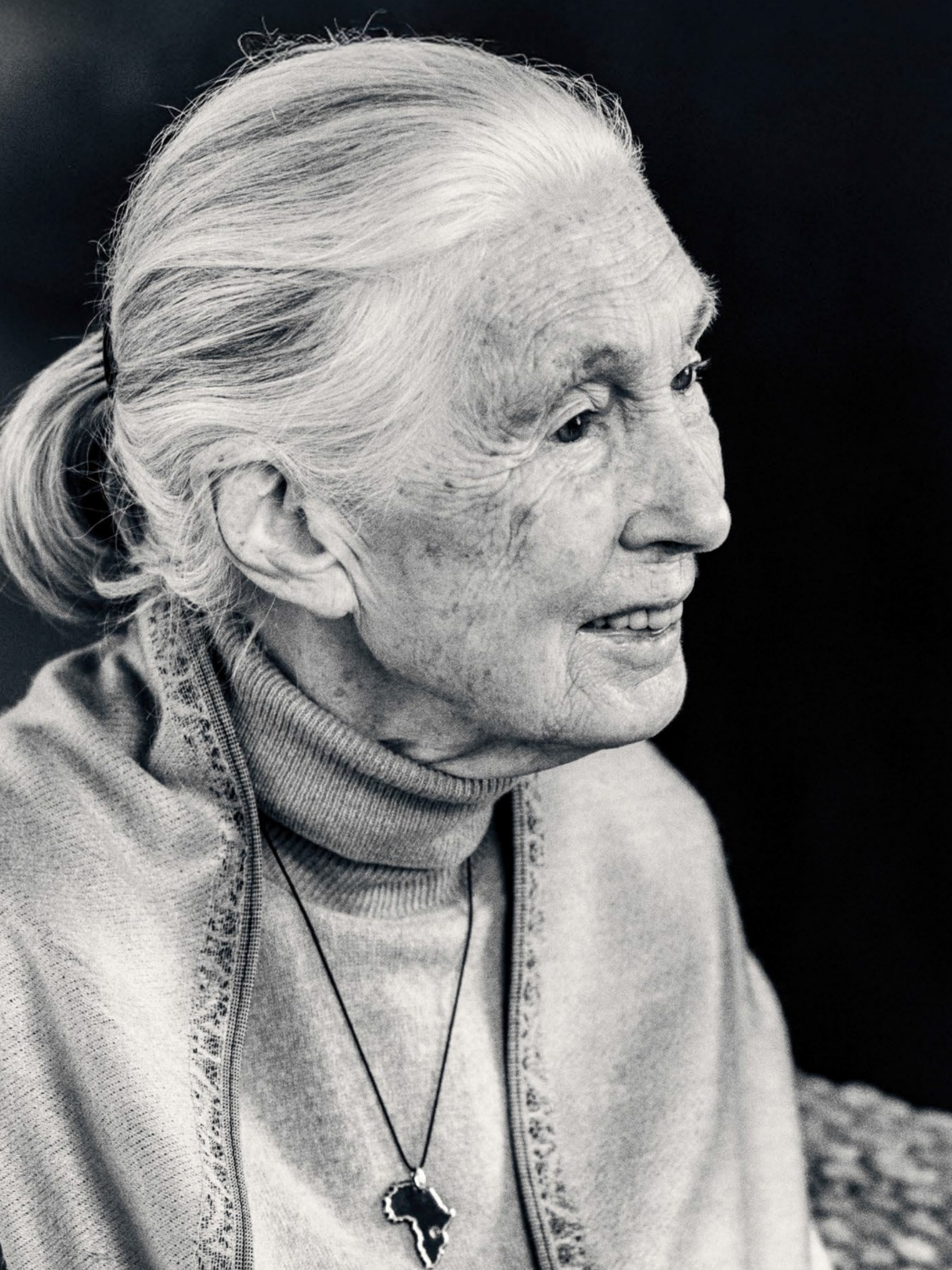
What about theatre? Is she still open to giving it a try? "That is the plan," she affirms. "That's my career path. When I am no longer in politics, I will return to theatre, even *lola* [grandma] and mummy roles. I was just derailed for decades by my other great love, politics. I have both influences in my family, theatre and politics."

Her grandfather, Jose Hontiveros, was a former senator, governor and Supreme Court associate justice. Her aunt, Daisy Hontiveros Avellana, was an actress and theatre director. Curiously, she also has an uncle, Fr Ed Hontiveros, SJ, a composer. Will Fr Honti's influence lead her to a religious life?

As open as Hontiveros is, anything is possible, including love. What will not change, nor waver, are her beliefs because they are already running through her veins and ingrained in her gene pool and thus will always be there wherever fate takes her.





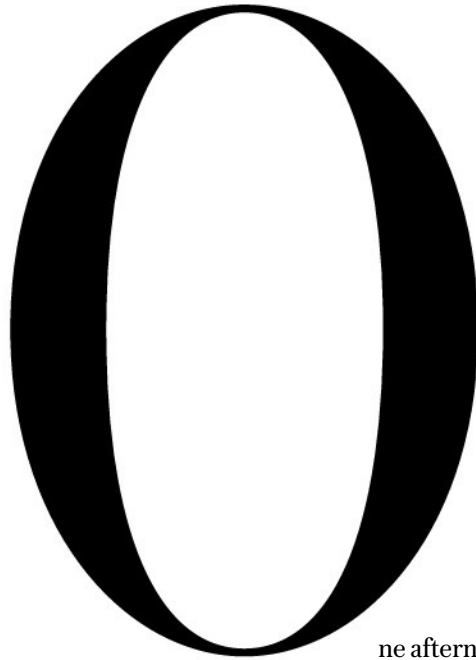


Jane Goodall

THE NATURE OF RESILIENCE

Jane Goodall has seen some dark days yet retains an unshakeable sense of hope. A month before she received the US Presidential Medal of Freedom from Joe Biden, she sat down with *Tatler* to share how her education impacted her life mission and why she believes younger generations can still save the planet

By Salomé Grouard and Karly Cox. Portraits by Alexander Yeung



One afternoon in late November, *Tatler* was found enjoying some unscheduled leisure time in the sun at Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Gardens, deep in the New Territories, speculating as to the location of our interviewee. As the two-hour mark approached, we received word that the interview was on hold to “see if the bird would fly”.

In some cases, we might have asked to reschedule. But in this case, we’d have waited hours more—after all, it’s not every day you have the opportunity to speak to Dr Jane Goodall, and if she wants to wait for the possible release of a convalescent black kite, we’re happy to sit tight.

Renowned ethologist Goodall was in Hong Kong, as part of her regular trips around the world with the Jane Goodall Institute (JGI), which she undertakes on more than 300 days of the year to spread her urgent message about the need for climate action. And while Covid curtailed her physical ability to share her message in person—she instead spent hours a day on Zoom—she’s now back on her full-time global crusade, not letting anything, least of all her imminent 91st birthday, stop her.

Despite her decades of fighting for the planet and animal welfare, her clarion call that “if we carry on the way we are with business as usual, we’re doomed”, and her constant reminders that “there’s a great urgency for us to do things in a different way, to understand that we cannot have unlimited economic development on a planet with finite natural resources and increasing numbers”, Goodall remains hopeful we can turn the climate emergency around.

Her source of hope? Young people, particularly those who join JGI’s Roots and Shoots programme, despite the often-confronting nature of climate inaction. While she admits to collective culpability—“Have we [older

generations] compromised their future? Yes, yes and yes—in fact, we’ve been stealing it ... certainly since the industrial revolution”—she refuses to succumb to the notion that we can’t start to reverse the damage we’ve inflicted. “Every single individual on the planet makes an impact every day, and almost all of us have a choice as to what sort of impact we make,” she says.

We ask what one thing individuals can do to start making more positive impacts on the planet: “Think about your own environmental footprint every day. And that needs education, because a lot of people just don’t get the right information. But if everybody thinks, ‘Well, if I turn off the tap when I’m cleaning my teeth, or if I pick up a piece of litter, so what?’ And indeed, if it’s just you, it wouldn’t make any flipping difference at all. But understanding that all around the world, awareness is growing, then millions of people turning off water and picking up plastic—that cumulatively makes a big difference.”

If nothing in what Goodall preaches seems particularly novel, it’s important to remember she’s been on a mission since childhood to protect the natural world and challenge the idea that humans are the most important living things. That’s not to say she isn’t concerned about the fate of her own species. When asked if capitalism is to blame for many of the planet’s woes, she delivers a somewhat withering glare. “Money is necessary. People need to live,” she says. “But there





Clockwise, from top left: In her early years; In Gombe, Tanzania; As a child; Also in Gombe



has to be a balance, and that means that we must reduce our unsustainable standard of living—and I know we can, because I lived through Second World War, when everything was rationed—and we lived perfectly well. I mean, yes, we lived in fear, but we were adequately able to survive.”

The lessons Goodall has been teaching around the world for decades are intrinsically linked to her personal experiences. Born in London in 1934, she still has vivid memories of the turbulence of Second World War. “Britain was being bombed by the Germans; we lost family members,” she remembers. “[Because of this,] we hated the sound of the German language; we were fearful of it.”

That was, until her mother sent her to Germany to teach English to the children of family friends. “My mum’s friends were horrified,” she recalls. “They told her, ‘How could you let your daughter go into that horrible, evil country?’ And my mum said: ‘I want Jane to understand that Hitler and the Nazis are not the German people.’”

Goodall’s mother, novelist Margaret (Vanne) Myfanwe Joseph, is behind much of what the scientist preaches: she created an environment for the young Jane that helped her “understand that being human is the most important [thing].” This attitude would be foundational in forging her future. As young as age ten, Goodall dreamt of going to Africa to live with wild animals and write books about them. It was an unlikely ambition: her family didn’t have the funds to support her dream, plus society wasn’t supportive of such ideas. Goodall remembers clearly how an uncle told her that “she didn’t have the stamina” to follow her dreams. After all, “she was just a girl, and girls didn’t do that sort of thing.”

Goodall was not going to let that stop her. “My mother was always supportive. She told me, ‘Jane, if you really want something like this, you’re going to have to work extremely hard and take advantage of every opportunity. If you don’t give up, you’ll find a way.’

“I didn’t realise how exceptional my mother was until much later.”

So Goodall refused to let these realities affect her future—and in 1957, aged 23, she found a way to get to Africa. Family friends owned a farm in Kenya where she could stay, so she set sail to Cape Town—“There were some [aeroplanes, but] they were expensive, and there were not many, so we went by boat.” After a month at sea, she arrived in Cape Town—and almost immediately was ready to leave again: she was horrified by apartheid. “I began noticing on the backs of the seats in the park, on the doors into the hotels and the restaurants, these words in Afrikaans: ‘*Slegs Blankes*,’” she recalls. “[I asked] What do they mean? [They meant] ‘White people only.’ And I wasn’t brought up that way.”

The way she was brought up would lead to immense success and acclaim, and to her becoming the world’s foremost expert on chimpanzees. She was the first person to witness them using tools and, by reporting this, she highlighted their similarity to humans, expanding her interest in them into activism. She soon became a role model for young people—particularly women, who still lack representation in scientific fields to this day.

“Every single individual on the planet makes an impact every day, and almost all of us have a choice as to what sort of impact we make”

However, as exceptional as Goodall's achievements were back then, she deeply objects to any oversimplification and sensationalising of her story.

After her historic observation of chimps using tools, she recalls being approached by *National Geographic*, which wanted to shoot her now iconic cover story in 1963, as well as to sponsor her expeditions—a moment that would completely transform her life.

“Very jealous male scientists—and there were many at the time—started saying I only got there because I’ve got nice legs for the cover. Well, I just wanted to be out in Africa and go back to the chimps, so if my legs were helping me, thank you! And they were nice legs; you can’t deny it.

“But I wasn’t in a male-dominated field per se, as [the field] didn’t exist. Being a woman actually helped me in some instances,” she says. “When I got to Tanzania [for another expedition in 1960, this time accompanied by her mother], the country was just about to attain independence from British colonial rule. Understandably, a lot of Tanzanian men were a little hostile towards white European males. But towards me, a young girl, and her mother? They wanted to help; they really cared about us.”

Goodall has scarcely been out of the public eye since those early days in Tanzania; for anyone with a degree of fame, it can be difficult to control your narrative, especially when the media is quick to put you on a pedestal—but how could we not? Her most recent accolade, in January, was receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom from US President Joe Biden. But she has managed to find ways to navigate the pressures of being an idol.

“To be quite honest, what happened to me is beyond my comprehension,” she says. “I can’t walk through an airport anywhere in the world without at least two people coming and asking for a selfie, often starting to cry. When this ‘iconic’ status began, I was shocked. I’m a shy person. I tried wearing dark glasses and letting my hair down ... It didn’t seem to work.

“I suddenly realised: if I really want to change the world and have people understand what they need to do, I better make use of this [fame]. So now, I am coping with two Janes. This one, talking to you, and then the icon. I have to work really, really, really hard to keep up with the icon.”

But keep up with her she has. And if we want to make a real difference to our planet’s future, the rest of us will have to keep up too.

GET INVOLVED

How you can support the Jane Goodall Institute

The Jane Goodall Institute, founded by its namesake in 1977, is a global non-profit organisation focused on fostering wildlife research, education and conservation. Since it was established in Hong Kong in 2002, the Jane Good Institute Hong Kong (JGIHK) has been dedicated to amplifying Goodall’s legacy and passion in the city.

At the heart of the Institute’s mission is the belief that everyone—no matter their age—can drive positive change. The JGIHK inspire community engagement, environmental stewardship and social responsibility through dynamic programmes, such as The Little Jane SDGs Academy and the Green Collar Training Program, which empower children aged five to 12 and teenagers aged 12 to 18 respectively, providing them with

essential knowledge about the environment. The Green Parenting Support Scheme fosters strong parent-child relationships through experiences in nature, while the Green Elder Internship Program invites those aged 55 and older to use their skills and expertise to coordinate educational activities—and explore second career opportunities.

Goodall’s message is clear: while we all share a responsibility to protect our planet, younger generations are the likeliest to take meaningful action. As she says, “Youth aren’t just the

future, they’re the present.” This belief is exemplified by the Jane Goodall Institute’s signature programme, Roots & Shoots, which connects thousands of young people in nearly 100 places, including Hong Kong, who are eager to contribute to a better world and implement impactful community service projects. These student-led, action-led projects have already proved themselves through meaningful initiatives, such as disaster relief fundraising, promoting fair-trade products, addressing homelessness and focusing on waste reduction, organic farming and beach clean-ups (fun fact: JGIHK organises more beach clean-ups than any other organisation in Hong Kong). The goal: grow a sense of self and sense of purpose and create a positive impact on people, other animals and the environment.



Find out more about this inspiring movement and how you can contribute by scanning the QR code.

Goodall with her
cherished stuffed
monkey, Mr H
Opposite page:
Goodall and
a chimpanzee



LETTER TO MY YOUNGER



SELF

Eight remarkable women write heartfelt letters—reflecting on resilience, purpose and the lessons that shaped their lives

Interview by Anton San Diego

KAREN DAVILA

Journalist, television news anchor and
UN Women National Goodwill Ambassador

Dear younger Karen,

You can do it. You will get there. I am so proud of you for dreaming big and working hard toward your goals. It's not going to be easy, but life never is. Nothing will be served to you on a silver platter.

You're tougher than you think and have something truly special: an unshakable passion for storytelling and expressing ideas—concepts and truths that need to be told. Where you channel your creative energies, magic happens.

Right now, there may be doubts creeping in. There might be moments when you question whether you're enough or on the right path. Trust me when I say you are exactly where you need to be. The road won't always be smooth, and there will be times you'll stumble, but each challenge is an opportunity for you to grow, learn and become stronger.

Don't be afraid. Don't rush. Take time to learn, listen, and soak in every experience. Whether in front of the camera or behind the scenes, remember that the best stories come from understanding the people you're speaking to. Your genuine curiosity and empathy will be your most significant assets, so never lose sight of them. Learn to listen. I know you—you get so excited that you tend to speak first. Calm down and chill.

You'll face setbacks, rejections and big NOs (some will hurt more than others), but don't let them define you. Don't let them stop you. Take a deep breath, dust yourself off and keep moving forward. Nothing lasts forever—not your pain, not your loss. Trust in your ability to bounce back because you have the strength. You've got the grit for it.

Karen, this early on, find your tribe. Encourage and support those you can learn from and those who need it. You reap what you sow, Karen. Always remember to sow kindness, even in a competitive work environment. Never lose your core values and the character your mum taught you to have.

And one last thing—don't forget to enjoy the journey. The moments of victory are sweet, but the moments of failure are character-forming. And before I forget, make time for quiet moments in between. Don't fall into the rush all the time. As a Christian, hold your quiet time and devotion to the Lord in your heart. You may lose your way as the road becomes rocky sometimes, but keep on. Always keep on.

You've got this. I believe in you, Karen. You are enough. God has given you everything you need to do His good work. Have faith.

With love that overflows,
Karen



BIANCA GONZALEZ INTAL

Television host, model, writer
and co-founder of She Talks Asia

Dear younger self,

As a 22-year-old, I would have given anything to take a peek into what my life would look like at 42. Will it really all work out? Will I still be in this career I'm trying to pursue? Who would I marry—and will I be successful?

Now that I'm 42, I'm grateful that no technology or magic allowed me to see my future because that would have ruined everything. We're not supposed to know; we're meant to figure it out along the way. I've never been afraid of ageing, or as Diane Von Furstenberg prefers to call it: living. I have always looked up to incredible women a decade ahead of me—Karen Davila, Tweetie de Leon, Angel Aquino—who have made me more excited than fearful of growing older.

Career. I was 21 when I pursued the opportunity to become a television host, and I often wondered if it was the career that was meant for me. Was I good enough? Would I make enough of a mark for this to be my career, or will I fade away after a few years? After two decades in the industry, I can confidently say that consistency beats intensity. There's something honourable about showing up every day no matter how you feel, putting in the work and giving your best, and looking not at short-term success but the long-term game. That's where the magic is—in the quiet moments when no one is watching, but you're still pushing forward.

Love. I was 31 when I said yes to forever and married the love of my life. But in all honesty, as a career-driven woman, I thought I would get married in my late 30s. I was busy building my career! But God and the Universe had other plans—and thankfully, after a few gut-wrenching heartbreaks, I had met the one for me. As painful as those break-ups were, and as ridiculous the craziest things I did for "love" were, I would not have changed anything. They were all the most challenging lessons I needed to learn: who I am, what I like and don't like, what I deserve and don't deserve, and what love means.

Passion. I was 27 when I became a lifestyle columnist for the *Philippine Star* and the editor-in-chief of *Meg* magazine, roles that I was privileged to have for five years. I was 31 when I wrote my first book, *Paano Ba 'To: How To Survive Growing Up*, which evolved into a video series, live events and podcast that releases weekly episodes—until now! I was 36 when I came on board as co-founder of She Talks Asia, a women empowerment community and advocacy agency, and 37 when I first became a volunteer for UN Women—posts I hold today. I write this not to brag but to share that two of the biggest lessons I've learnt are that life is lived in seasons, and we should honour the different seasons we're in, and two, only we can define what success means for us. While it is tempting to imagine my life when I'm 62, I'd rather not because life isn't what happens to us; it's how we live it.

I don't have everything figured out, but when I catch myself asking, "Why isn't this happening for me?" at least now I know the answer: it simply isn't the right time.

With gratitude,
Bianca

KATRINA LEGARDA

Lawyer and advocate for
women's and children's rights

Dear younger self,

One day you are going to find yourself staring down at a rapist. Not in a dark alley. Not in a nightclub. You will be in a courtroom, all eyes on you, prosecuting a congressman who tortured children with sexual assault for fun.

I know this might be hard for you to imagine now. All those people are watching you, judging you, and wondering what to say to people during social events. You are fond of solitude and solitary pursuits. You're a little different—odd.

But remember what your irritated grandmother told you: "Being shy is not an option—it just means you think everyone is talking about you or looking at you. Get over it." And you will. You might still prefer your company to a cocktail party, but you can thrive in and enjoy both settings. Because who cares what people think?

Your grandmother is your heroine. Her history in the fight for women's equality—especially in women's right to vote—will engender in you the realisation that patriarchy, male control, is unacceptable. Your history with your Lola will enable you to make it your life's mission to uplift women.

You love Charlotte Bronte: "The human heart has hidden treasures, In secret kept, in silence sealed; The thoughts, the hopes, the dreams, the pleasures, Whose charms were broken if revealed." So you'll tend to avoid introspection. You prefer, as the sneaker ad says, to "Just do it". Don't lose this impulse to take action. *Carpe diem*—seize the day. For some reason, you do not fear the unknown. What's the worst that could happen? Death? Everyone dies, anyway. Some person saying no to something you wanted? Believe me, you will always find another way, another path.

Almost always say "yes". You will be glad of this decades from now and look back and be grateful for the many opportunities you might otherwise have missed, like jumping out of the plane with that parachute. But also know when saying "no" is best for you. Do not hesitate. Stand your ground.

You will have some unfortunate, sometimes tragic, experiences with betrayal, pain, and faithless friends. You might feel that bad things, bad days, and bad experiences will never pass. But trust me, they do end. You will reach a milestone birthday you never thought you'd get to because your mother and sister died so young. And from your experiences will come the acuity to recognise the liar, the cheater, the person not to be trusted. You have this instinct already—you know what people are like within seconds of meeting them, but experience will hone instinct into skill.

Perhaps best of all, your friendships will be wonderful (some short-lived, some lifelong—there is a season for everything, after all). You will have children and grandchildren, and your joy with them will outshine every lover's quarrel, work conflict, disappointment or setback you will face. So have no fear. Stay curious. Seize the day. And just do it.

Love,
Katrina



DORIS MAGSAYSAY HO

President and chief executive officer
of the Magsaysay Group of Companies

Dear younger me,

As a child, you bought the idea that a girl and a boy were meant to complete each other. So you did just that. You tried to be efficient and found fulfilment in fixing things, believing that your role was to fill the gaps in the boys you met instead of focusing on filling your gaps.

Your good friend Monique gave you a book that transformed your life. *The Missing Piece* by Shel Silverstein is about a "missing piece" searching for someone with a gap she can complete.

The sequel, *The Missing Piece Meets the Big O*, made you realise that no person can complete another... One's spiritual quest should be to complete oneself. On that journey, you meet other beings searching to complete themselves—like the Big O, who has no space for a missing piece.

Through my experiences, learning this lesson in life's journey is essential. So today, I am giving you an excerpt from my favourite passage, "Marriage," from *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran.

Love one another, but make not a bond of love:
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.

Fill each other's cup, but drink not from one cup.
Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.

Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone,
Even as the strings of a lute are alone, they quiver with the same music.

Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping,
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.
And stand together yet not too near together:
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,
And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.

With all my love,
Doris



MARGIE MORAN FLOIRENDO

Miss Universe 1973, author and former
chairperson of the Cultural Center of the Philippines

To my younger self,

If I could start life over again, I would make some changes, but overall, I am content with who I am and what I have achieved. Only those who have experienced their later years have the wisdom to look back and share insights with the younger generation.

Believe in Yourself

I always believed in my ability to become anything I wanted. My confidence in what I can do has come a long way. Yes, I have been a student leader, an environmentalist, a woman leader, a businesswoman, a congressional spouse, a wife, a mother, a producer, a TV host, a publisher and best known as Miss Universe. My diverse experiences and mistakes along the way have made me a wiser, more knowledgeable and more interesting person. As a born-again Christian, I realise that if I had known then what I know now, I would have been more humble, loyal and surrendering to faith. I would have led a more peaceful life focused on doing things for God's glory instead of the thrill of the moment.

Relationships

A family must remain united because a fractured one can lead to generational issues. I am grateful to Mum and Dad for keeping our family together; we even prayed the rosary daily.

One important lesson I learnt is that marriage should have the parents' blessing. Without that support, it may be doomed, and unhappiness could follow. I was too young and in love to understand this at the time.

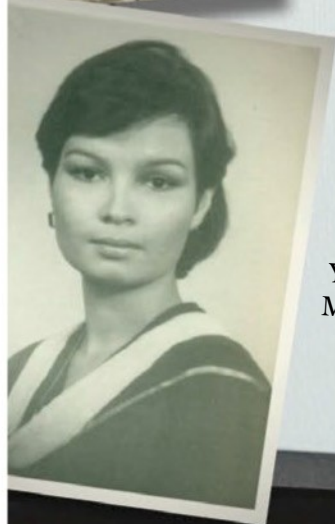
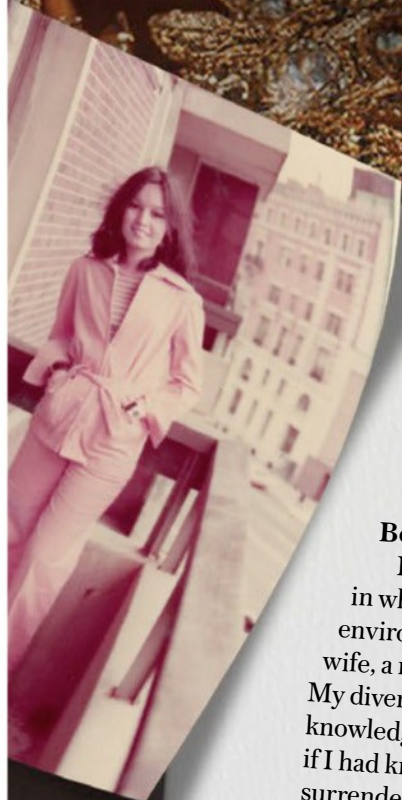
I value the friendships I've formed and cherish the memories of those relationships. Friendships come at different stages in life. The adventurous ones were there with me before I got married at 21. Birthdays held significance for me as they served as reminders of my growth. As we age, we become more selective about whom we choose to keep in our lives. Once our children leave home, our friends often become our constant companions. I am fortunate to keep a close friendship with my college batchmates.

Gossip

Avoid gossiping, as a malicious or harmful tongue can lead to conflict. I remember my grandmother's stories about when she and her children became the subjects of gossip. They were the illegitimate family of the nation's highest official. One evening, his lady and her close advisors were outside her home, near the presidential palace, and spoke cruelly about them. It's important to be kind and polite to others because there are innocent people whose lives can be profoundly affected by such actions.

Reflecting on my journey, I realise that every experience, both triumphs and trials, shaped who I am today.

Yours,
Margie





THELMA SAN JUAN

Journalist and founding editor of TheDiarist.ph

Dear younger self,

Like. Share. Delete.

That's what I would have told my younger self to do, if only the apps existed in those days. Mark your moments as Like, Share, or Delete. Life could be that simple. You cherish and share people. You let go those you need to let go.

Travel light—because you are just passing through.

Moments come and go. People—even those you can't seem to live without and have incredible fun with—come and go.

Like:

- Give back. Pay back. Look back. I cherish friends and colleagues who look back, know how to give back, yet move on with a grateful heart.
- Tennis. If only I started to play it at five years old.... Tennis' life's lessons: Move, then move on. Commit to a shot. Timing is everything. Know your opponent.
- Hard work lasts. Hype doesn't.
- Work hard. Do marketing just as hard.
- Medicine or writing/journalism? Journalism. Coming out of my dark room studio where I was processing portraits, I was scolded by my lolo: "Are we sending you to college to be a photographer in Luneta? Told you to enroll in Medicine!"
- A happy memory.... The soul remembers.

Share:

What I know now, but didn't years ago....

- No such thing as free lunch.
- One marries not only for love, but for lifestyle. Famous designer/artist Budji, my good friend, loves to say this.
 - Choose your battles. Cherish your victories. Cherish more your defeats because they recur.
 - If someone says they can't live without you, chances are, in truth, they can.
 - Parenting could be overrated. A parent must learn to make herself expendable.
 - You work, not really for a business firm, but for character of one who leads the business.
 - Know your grammar—and your profit/loss statement along with it.
- My lesson in publishing.

Delete: Or what to let go of:

- Users
- Clutter. In your house. In your space. In your mind. In your heart.
- Sooner or later, you delete a name from your contact list. That's life. That's death.

Always,
Thelma

KORINA SANCHEZ-ROXAS

Broadcast journalist and television host

Dear younger Korina,

Feels strange, but therapeutic, to be writing to you. I reflect on these experiences that have shaped who you are today. I mix in a bit of lessons learned along the way and with which I wish I had been there like a ghost to have guided you through. But, while there may always be the inescapable hint of regret from acts of commission and you must know that I do like the human being you turned out to be today.

Some thoughts that should help you navigate through the obstacle courses—as well as cheer you on to dance through commission as time passes, you may be uncertain about where you are headed because your the sweet triumphs forthcoming.

It Begins with a Dream

We all are born into different life circumstances. You may be uncertain about where you are headed because your world seems small. But you must make an effort to know who you are, what you're capable of and what you stand for. It all begins with a dream. Your imagination may go beyond the limits. But it is your magic carpet to however far and high you can go. Remember when you were telling your classmates you wanted to be a newscaster on TV? They laughed and couldn't believe it. If you believe in yourself, always try to do the right thing, acknowledge your feelings and discipline your responses, work very hard—I have to say that very few things are impossible to achieve.

Change is Inevitable

A current great thinker I watched on what is today known as YouTube was asked, "What is the most important lesson your child should learn?" The answer was, "adapting to change".

From the moment we are born, we change nannies, addresses, schools, friends, preferences, jobs... As you get older you'll want predictability and stability. But with life growth come the changes which we don't and can't control. Many of these changes will be unpleasant, unwelcome, discombobulating. But it is in the ability to accept, adapt to if not embrace change where you can thrive and grow and evolve into the best you. Basically, it is survival. How you adapt determines the quality of your life.

People are Important

Another saying goes, "It isn't the conquest that a soldier remembers, but the fellow soldier whom he was shoulder to shoulder with in battle". I couldn't have gone as far as I have without the entire village helping me, encouraging, loving, holding me up, teaching and listening to me. We must be grateful. In our haste to conquer and get to point B, we touch people and go. Many relationships are worth cultivating and keeping. Give people time. Some of my oldest friends and classmates, teacher, mentors and co-workers, even acquaintances I've started to seek out again and reconnect with. The authenticity because of shared history is valuable. You'll be surprised how you can grow together with people and, importantly, through relationships you know you are never alone.

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

Knowing you as the younger me, cleaning the glass to spotless perfection is the order of the day. My dear, lasting perfection doesn't exist. We are all flawed. Everyone makes mistakes. We learn from them and get better. Everyone falls short somehow. We acknowledge and embrace our limitations. You do your best, all the time. And if it is good enough for you and for the people who matter, then that's your perfection.

Compassion and Passion

There's that philosophical question: "What is our purpose in life?" You'll get there eventually. To cut to the chase: Yes it is essential you follow your passions to be successful and happy. But it isn't in feeding yourself that you will find the kind of happiness that matters.

I believe the purpose we are here on earth is to simply make life better—for others and for the planet. It helps to treat ourselves once in a while. But if you look around you, the need for help from those with less than you is overwhelming. Where do you start, you might ask? Start with what's in front of you. A househelp who needs to keep her daughter in school? A co-worker who needs medication he can't afford? A stray dog shivering in the streets from a storm? Compassion can be a passion. And I assure you it is the one thing that validates you to your core, that no one else needs to even know about, and you are just happy.

There is too much to share. These, for now. Believe. Believe in a Higher Being and in the Good that is invincible and never changes. Believe in yourself. Believe it will be as you dream of it—and more.

With love and excitement,
The future Korina



STEPHANIE ZUBIRI

Journalist, author, content creator
and host of *Soulful Feasts* podcast

Dear younger Steph,

The sleeves of my smocked dress pinched my arms as I gripped the microphone. I stared into a crowd of glamorous faces, bright smiles and flawless makeup. The high-pitched strains of *The Greatest Love of All* played through an old 8-track sound system. "I believe the children are our future..."

I was always obliged to sing for my parents' guests at countless parties. At five years old, I wasn't a great singer, but I loved performing. Whitney Houston was my idol, and her cassette was my only one. Each morning, I'd blast *Wanna Dance with Somebody* on my little pink stereo, dancing in front of the mirror, bursting with joy and the exhilarating freedom of childhood.

But life moved on. Fast forward 30 years, and those carefree moments faded into a blur of self-loathing.

Where did that little girl go?

She still lives inside, waiting to be rediscovered. The key is to heed the song's lyrics: "Learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all."

Here is a roadmap to finding yourself again.

It's okay to not try so hard. Force creates resistance. The more you push, the more things push back. Instead of gripping tightly to how you think life should be, allow it to flow. Align with your values and focus on what truly matters.

Learn to love your body. It's the only one you have, and it will change—soften, shift, and grow stronger in unexpected ways. Every stage of your body's journey is beautiful. Stop obsessing over imperfections and start appreciating all the incredible things it does for you. Nourish it, move it, and be grateful for it.

Be kinder to yourself. That critical voice in your head isn't the truth; it's just fear and old conditioning. Speak to yourself with the same kindness you offer to others. The way you talk to yourself shapes your experience—make it loving.

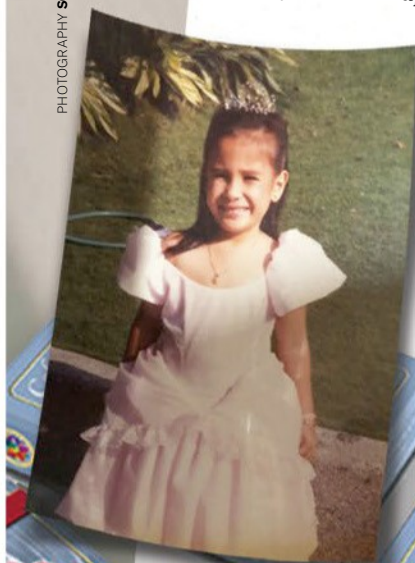
Stop comparing yourself to others. You are not meant to follow someone else's path. Your timeline, success, and beauty are uniquely yours. The more you focus on others, the less you see the magic in yourself. Own who you are—that's your superpower.

Choose yourself 100 per cent of the time. This choice allows you to be the best version of yourself. You owe it to the people you love and, most importantly, to yourself. Prioritising your needs cultivates a deeper relationship with yourself and authentic connections with others.

Love and light,
Steph



PHOTOGRAPHY SCOTT A WOODWARD (PRESENT PORTRAIT)



PORTRAITS OF



Renowned photographer Mark Nicdao takes us behind the scenes of his artistic journey, revealing the captivating creative process behind the stunning works now part of the J Paul Getty Museum's collection

By Gabriel Bohol.

Images Courtesy of Mark Nicdao

BRILLIANCE



Mark Nicdao beside
*Hommage to Eugene
Delacroix* by one of
his favourite painters,
Henry Fantin-Latour, at
Musee d'Orsay in Paris

Nancy Castiglione,
Makati 2008,
print 2023 **Opposite**
page: Nicdao's
photographs being
printed out





O

ver his long, illustrious career, Mark Nicdao has celebrated numerous milestones. From mounting his first solo exhibition in 2022 to joining a diverse roster of contemporary visual artists at Asia Now Paris Art Fair and being selected as the portrait photographer at the royal wedding of Prince Abdul Mateen and Princess Anisha Rosnah of Brunei, he has brought Filipino portraiture to the forefront. For 2025, he adds another breakthrough to his impressive record—having his photographs shown by the J Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. “These are all huge milestones for me, and I couldn’t put any comparisons between them... They were products of pure hard work—being mostly quiet, delivering and enjoying it without trying too hard—and sheer luck,” he says.

Featuring five prominent Filipino figures dressed in Puey Quiñones and Patrice Ramos-Diaz, Nicdao’s prints were carefully selected by J Paul Getty Museum curator of photographs, Paul Martineau and recognised as some of his best. While these photos were taken in completely different contexts in 2008 and 2012, they all share a timeless theme—forever immortalised. “These photos mirror something inside the audience. It’s like getting lost in time, drawing your eyes in to see something special,” he quips.

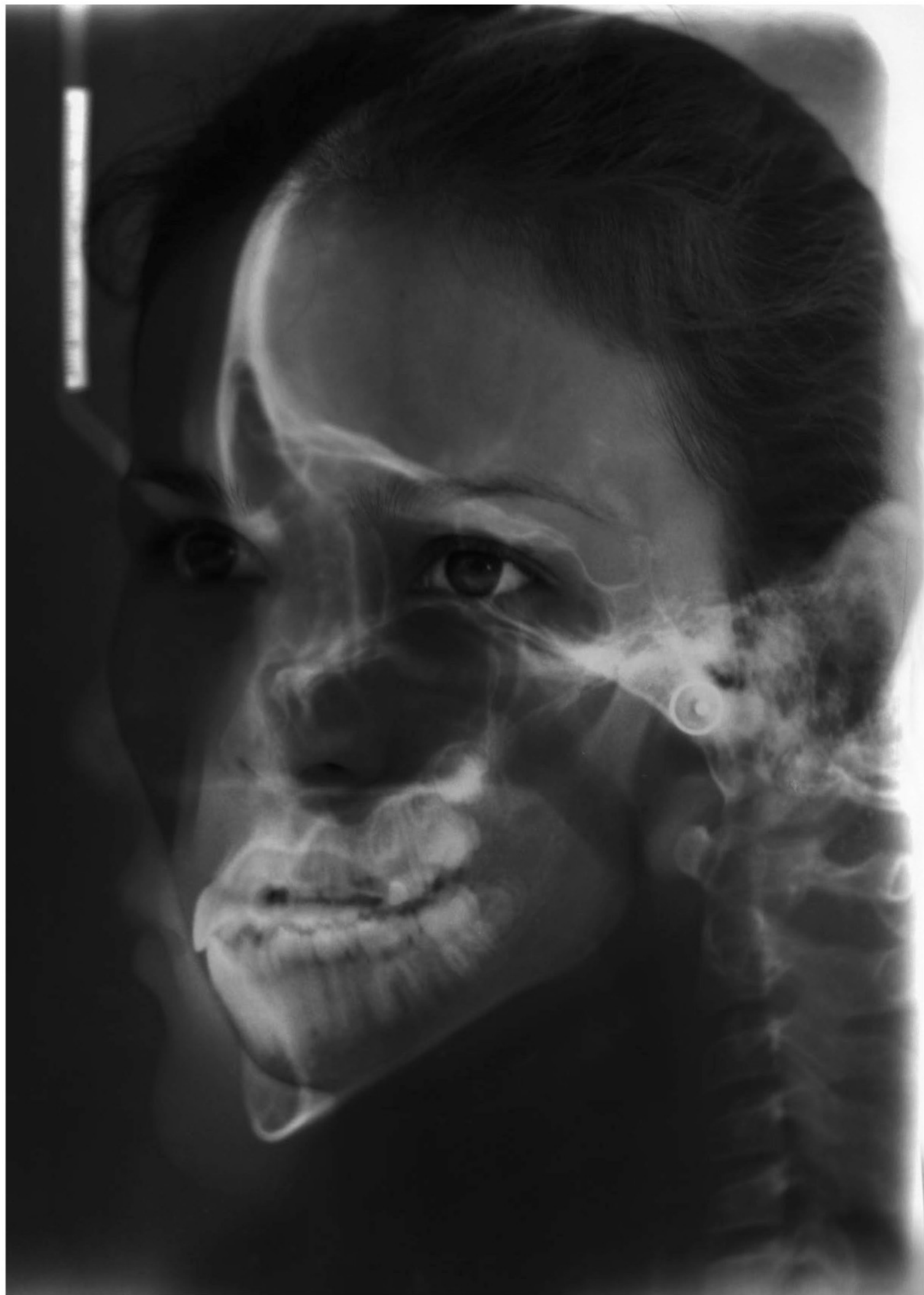
Though these images may evoke certain emotions from viewers, Nicdao mentions that he subconsciously tries to convey a sense of nostalgia, even melancholia, derived from other mediums and personal experiences he has faced. “I can’t redirect people from seeing what they see.

ver his long, illustrious career, Mark Nicdao has celebrated numerous milestones. From mounting his first solo exhibition in 2022 to joining a diverse roster of contemporary visual artists at Asia Now Paris Art Fair and being selected as the portrait photographer at the royal wedding of Prince Abdul Mateen and Princess Anisha

You’re allowed to have your own opinions about the work, but if you understand my vision, you won’t have any more questions,” he says. Nicdao looks back fondly at his shoots with these women, proudly exclaiming they’re “the best people you can shoot in front of the camera.”

Ever the perfectionist, Nicdao mentions he was bent on having flawless photographs—leaving no room for blurred edges or imbalanced colours. A product of spontaneity and coincidence, Jo Ann Bitagcol’s portrait shot in Tanay, Rizal, was a happy accident. Initially an outdoor shoot, Nicdao’s eye was drawn to a hand-painted wall inside an abandoned building. “When you enter these places, there’s not much light inside. We needed the right kind of balance for these scenes... I used swift light to capture every detail of the dress and movement. I wanted to be stark and sharp—my aperture was around 16, 18 or even more—it had to be almost frozen,” he shares. “It looked fuzzy and a bit grimy, but at the same time, it looked like a fresco. Jo Ann’s Patrice Ramos Diaz dress, paired with her kabuki make-up and the backdrop, made it look painterly.”

For Iza Calzado’s photo, Nicdao shares that he was playing around with the then-fantasy idea of robotics and the impossibility of things and was inspired by the 2011 film *La Piel Que Habito* (*The Skin I Live In*) and Garbage’s music video of *The World Is Not Enough*. “It was a cover shoot for *Rogue* magazine, and its senior art director Miguel Lugtu came from the hospital with his x-ray. I got curious, asked to see it, and immediately asked, ‘Can we use this? Let’s shoot Iza first with no makeup and styled hair, then I’ll shoot the x-ray and superimpose it over Iza to make her feel more robotic—a perfect being,” shares Nicdao. As if to predict the future with the rise and prominence of artificial intelligence technology, Calzado’s portrait concept is no more extended fantasy but something very real.



Queenmelo Esguerra,
Makati 2008, print
2023 **Opposite page:**
Iza Calzado, *Skull*,
Manila 2012, originally
published in 2012 as
Rogue magazine's
cover story



“There are so many amazing people, artists and voices the world needs to hear. A lot of us don’t know where to start, but giving up is not a choice”



KC Concepcion,
Makati, *Flow Series*
Show 2008,
print 2023

Jo Ann Bitagcol,
Antipolo 2008, print
2023, Unpublished
Opposite page:
Nicdao poses
for a photo



“If you’re working and not enjoying it, I don’t know if it’s worth it... That makes me feel great about being an artist right now; everything’s just up in the air”



Despite being a renowned photographer, Nicdao often struggles with time during his shoots. He highlights the importance of streamlining his ideas to be more decisive in using his flashes of inspiration. “You only have 30-40 minutes in a shoot, so you must concentrate to make things as simple as possible. You don’t want to lose the moment because of indecisiveness,” he shares.


To Nicdao, this milestone is an opportunity for photography to grow in the Philippines—believing that the medium isn’t entirely on par with how other nations view it. “This is a big win for all of us [the community]... I think it’s time for us to see photography as a big art medium. Being recognised by a museum like Getty is just the start for Filipinos to elevate their thinking, vision, and ideas on creating photographs—be it photojournalism, fashion, or advertising,” he says. However, this recognition reflects his evolution as a photographer while leaving his audience room for curiosity. “These [photographs] show that I didn’t change a lot. I have my way of doing things. This is the foundation of how I think, direct and compose—it’s

always been the same... Evolution is a hard thing to explain especially when I’m talking about my work... I think only keen observers can actually see that. I can’t speak for myself,” he adds.

Looking back on his creative journey, Nicdao urges budding photographers to press on without losing sight of their vision. The scene is full of talent, and standing out is a real challenge, making dedication and perseverance all the more rewarding. “There are so many amazing people, artists and voices the world needs to hear. A lot of us don’t know where to start, but giving up is not a choice,” he says.

As artists access more platforms for better self-marketing, he believes striking the perfect balance between earning a sustainable living and passion is crucial. “You have to work hard and enjoy everything. If you’re working and not enjoying it, I don’t know if it’s worth it... That makes me feel great about being an artist right now; everything’s just up in the air, and it’s up to you what you’ll grab,” Nicdao continues.






Paved with Binangonan stones, the entrance of the main pavilion has a clear view of generous wide eaves that provide comfort from the tropical heat

PRIDE OF PLACE

When all the elements are present—space, health, wealth—an architect with a vision such as Royal Pineda can whip up a luxurious oasis in an unexpected location and prove his point that Modern Filipino belongs anywhere and everywhere

By Chit L. Lijauco. Photography by ANDRA Visuals



The front entrance on the left opens into two spacious living rooms with furniture by noted artisans from all over the country and a stairway leading to the private theatre on the second floor

They were so sure of what they wanted; but in the end, their house turned out to be more than what they had bargained for: grander than their vision and even farther from where their imagination initially took them.

"It wasn't supposed to be this grand a scale," she says. "The entire property is 4 hectares but the residential space we wanted to develop was so much less than a hectare, actually 700 sqm. We originally wanted a 250 sqm house on a 700 sqm lot. It was architect who suggested that we do it this way. After we talked to him, the project blew up ten times!"

Their architect of choice was Royal Pineda of Royal Pineda+ Architecture•Design. He has always espoused the Modern Filipino style, and

took on a personal mission to spread this concept to everywhere his projects take him, with no regional nor continental boundaries. "We really want to highlight the Filipino-ness in every project. Modern Filipino. To show that Filipino design can be tasteful," he defines his mission.

When he met the young couple, they were only in their mid-30s. They've seen his work on Instagram and were bringing to him pictures of some houses they liked, most of them, ironically, were Pineda's projects. "Their original brief was for a smaller house," he remembers. But after seeing his 4-ha canvas and getting to know his young clients, his vision went wild.

"I asked when they were planning on building their dream house and quickly suggested that they might as well do it now while they were still young and able to enjoy it



together with their growing children,” Pineda says. “This was my pitch to them.”

For the architect, his clients ticked all the boxes. “They have time, money and health. They can enjoy an awesome house for a long, long time not just by themselves but with their children,” he explains. Moreover, his mission has more chances of being imbibed by a family whose sense of culture is still malleable. “So, why prolong?” he justifies.

The couple hails from the same town north of Manila, were classmates in high school and sweethearts in college. His family is in the trucking business; hers are professionals. His average academic performance bows to his sharp business acumen. She aced her medical technology course at the University of Santo Tomas and her clinical research degree

at The Michener Institute of Education in Toronto. She was already the project manager at Gamma Dynacare Medical Laboratories in Canada when he gave her an ultimatum to get married. In ten years’ time, they will be celebrating their 25th anniversary. Theirs is a perfect partnership. He built his own trucking company, like his father did, but entered as well the fuel station business. She immersed herself in what he built, ably handling the finances while he concentrated on the operations. With hard work, a feel for the business and a combination of caution and courage, they have successfully grown both their trucking and their fuel station businesses.

This sense of stability, and their growing family of four kids then, perhaps inspired them to also think of expanding their small home,





Clockwise: The primary bedroom overlooks the entire garden; Nature as a partner in form is strongly felt, as the house grows with the landscape; A formal dining room on the first floor; A view of the private wing showing the guest room on the first floor, the primary bedroom on the second, and the gym on the third





Clockwise from above: On the right foreground, part of the acacia tree around which the house was designed, and across, the first floor living rooms with high ceilings; The second living room features Miguel Aguas ceiling lamps, OMO Furniture corner lamps and an accent wall of Monumental Travertine from Kaufman Stone; A koi pond leads to the Man Cave

which was on this same spot where they built their dream house.

“From the very start I told my wife that this is where I want to build our house,” he declares. “I also promised my dad that I will take care of this ancestral property and will keep it within the family, having grown up in our ancestral home farther back. So, I bought the lots from my dad little by little.” Out of the family-owned 4 hectares, they now own half of it.

He is also a landscape hobbyist. Even before they consulted with Pineda, the couple already commissioned well-known landscape artist Ponce Veridiano to make sense of the trees and the foliage on the property. In fact, the garden played a crucial role in the essence of the house.

“There is an existing acacia tree around which the design evolved,” Pineda informs.

Part of Pineda’s design mission is the emphasis on the culture of the family of his clients. “A house has to have a clear identity that pops out even if you don’t look for it. Otherwise,





it'll just be another house. If you don't get to design the soul of the family, then you'll just be designing another house," the architect expounds. To do this, Pineda spent hours getting to know his young clients. He sat down with them, visited the project. "They were both very open and that helped," he shares.

He learnt about their respective family histories and their love life. He learnt that they first tried it out living in Canada where all her family resides but that he was miserable being away from his beloved hometown and how she dutifully gave up everything to go back and start their family here. In the end Pineda concluded, "The culture of this family is entrenched in the garden and their roots in this town."

A house of this scale, style and grandeur may seem incongruous in a provincial location but Pineda quickly corrects this common notion. "Here is a couple very much in love with their roots. Rather than suggest abandoning those roots, help them move forward and achieve a dream. Put their roots



From left: Across, the Man Cave and to the right, the swimming pool leading to the pool house; Lush vegetation frames his collection of cars

together and discover their identity. Then make their them, a better them. Somehow, if you replicate that betterment in all parts of the country, then it becomes a Modern Philippines. This, I think, is the essence of the message. You may expect a house of this scale, this luxury in a place like Forbes. But why limit locations if the space exists?"

A common belief among Filipinos, according to Pineda, is that life is better outside or elsewhere. To which he vehemently disagrees. "We need not leave our roots. We just need to make our space better."

BUILDING AN OASIS

This part of the country is known to be hotter than the rest of the regions, but not at this dream house enveloped by tall trees and refreshing foliage. Add to this a permeable design style that results in a feeling of being in the middle of the garden, not just seeing the greenery around but even the blueness above.

"The idea of the architecture is really to just let things flow," Pineda explains. "For me, what dictated the design was the scale of the acacia tree around which the house is built. That's why even the ceiling heights are tall because we wanted to emphasize the trees outside. At this height you

view up to the top of even the tall trees. I think this is about a 3.5-metre-high ceiling. Might be too high for a typical Filipino but again it is all about bringing the atmosphere of the garden in."

This continuous visual flow starts from when the huge metal door (humungous hinge designed by Jinggoy Buensuceso) opens. The eyes are drawn into a spacious living room and out through a glass sliding door into the garden and smack into the principal acacia tree which, the owner informs, is about 20 to 30 years old. The high ceilings and doors do not impair the vision and allows it to move on past the tree, deeper into the garden where, in the horizon is the end of the property. But you are told that to the left, before reaching the end, you find the couple's business offices. How cool is that? To be able to walk from home to office and back every day.

Retracing our steps, we're back at the entrance. Clearly, this spacious area that holds a sofa set by OMO Furniture and Bituin Furniture with a coffee table by Milo Naval is where several works by Filipino artists and artisans are displayed, whether they be functional or decorative. "We really wanted to feature Filipino designers. And art from all the regions," affirms Pineda.



To the right of the entrance is a formal dining room, the elevator leading to two floors up, a family area and the guest room. Done in green with monstera leaves (her favourite plant) as a dominant pattern, the guest room is where her parents usually stay when they visit from Canada twice a year on the average. Like the other spaces in this wing, the guest room also visually and literally opens up into the garden.

To the left of the entrance is another sitting room, an entertainment area for the couple when friends come around. Above this space, on the second floor, is a more private sitting area that leads to the theatre for nine. Using this most often is the eldest child who's in eighth grade. "We would rather that our children invite classmates and friends for a movie at home, rather than go to one in the mall," she comments.

Going out into the garden on the left is the Man Cave, which holds his car and motorcycle collections. Complete with a bar and great sound system, it is a favourite chilling area when they entertain. "We designed it in a way that if there was a bigger party, you can get all the cars out and the space becomes one big pavilion," offers Pineda. During her recent birthday, around 150 people comfortably fit

inside the Man Cave when all the cars were taken out. Now, if you're wondering where the Woman Cave is, she will be quick to point out, "The whole house!"

Farther down is the pool house where there are lounge chairs to relax in and a private room to enjoy a massage and other spa treatments.

The right wing, on the other hand, houses the private areas. All told, there are a total of six bedrooms.

And a lot of areas to entertain or receive visitors as the couple love hosting parties for family and friends. She thinks that to date, the biggest party they've held at home is for 250 for her husband's birthday; and the greatest number of parties in a month they've had is 14. "In fact, a friend who has an events place told me once, 'You know, you have more bookings than my events place!'" she recalls with a light chuckle in her voice.

Another amusing anecdote is the seemingly parallel growth of the family and the house. "They had only four children when we were building the house, now she just gave birth six months ago to their fifth!" Pineda starts. "But there was one bedroom too many!" reacts the young husband.

Makes one wonder though what will happen if they build an annex.

The globally
acclaimed chef
at his eponymous
restaurant in Manila,
the newly opened
Gordon Ramsay
Bar and Grill

Master OF THE FLAME

Discover how world-renowned chef Gordon Ramsay defines mastery and upholds excellence across his restaurants worldwide. *Tatler* sat with him to get his perspective on the industry and advice on best practices, too

By Isabel Martel Francisco.

Images courtesy of Newport World Resorts. Additional images by Kryss Rubio



The many sides
to this larger than
life culinary star



W

ith over 85 restaurants worldwide, a booming social media presence, and binge-worthy television and digital shows, Gordon Ramsay has earned every stripe, clearly defining his reputation as a culinary juggernaut. Aside from

his many more casual outlets, his eponymously named establishment in Chelsea, London, has impressively maintained three Michelin stars since 2001. Ramsay also has two stars at Le Peresoir d'Argent in Bordeaux, France; and 1 star at both Pétrus, London and Gordon Ramsay au Trianon in Versailles. He recently added to his restaurant empire by opening Gordon Ramsay Bar & Grill in the Philippines and has just paid us a visit on an Asian-tour while filming for a new upcoming Netflix special.

Tatler sat with him for a face-to-face interview to ask deep questions about his take on the industry. Read on to learn some valuable life lessons and advice from this seasoned chef:

You've worked with people who have gone to culinary school, and those who are self-taught. So, what makes a chef a chef?

That's a really good question: What makes a great chef? What makes a great chef is research and the tenacity to get out of your comfort zone and constantly push boundaries. You know, we are going through an extraordinary moment right now. Everyone has said goodbye to Covid, and everyone's focusing on some new, exciting innovations in the future.

A great chef is always searching for ideas. A great chef is always teaching. A great chef is constantly discovering, and a great chef is always listening to his customers. There are many facets to being a great chef, but number one is being a great teacher. It's a team game. Sometimes, brigades can have up to 25 or 30 chefs; here in Manila, there are close to 35 chefs. So, you must teach, which is essential to move forward. You may have a great idea, but if the team can't execute it, then there's no point.

How important is a restaurant's beverage programme, and why should it be given as much love as the food menu?

Beverages are crucial to good food, but they must be balanced. I was recently in Melbourne, and we had an incredible dinner paired with fragrant teas and not one ounce of alcohol. It was one of the most exciting dinners we've ever had. So, the beverage programme is essential for me, especially for occasions and refined palates.

We have six children, four of whom are adults, and 50 per cent of the time, when they go out to eat, they

prefer non-alcoholic cocktails. And so that's the way things are moving. That's what's happening. That's why the industry needs to adapt. The beverage programme is essential and critical to the overall experience.

What do you think makes the best dining experience?

That's an excellent question—atmosphere, lighting, elegance, great food, comfortable chairs, immaculate bathrooms. For instance, at Bar and Grill, as you walk past, I want everyone to desire to be in this fantastic space. It's intimate. The furnishings are soft; the music is perfect. And first off, you get sucked into the energy.

That makes a great restaurant: staff smiling and at their best and the kitchen producing fantastic food. And then there's this theatre that attracts customers. And that's the sign of a great restaurant—a buzz, an atmosphere and an ambience. But more than that, people just breaking bread and having a great time speak volumes.

How do you maintain your standards across your brands worldwide?

We have the most impressive teams, and this isn't a team that's just been put together in the last 18 months or two years. I'm working with maître d's, sommeliers and operations managers who have been with me for nearly 20 years. This group has become successful because we've grown together, working on three key principles: like, trust and respect. We have all those functioning daily.

We also spend time in these restaurants. Ronnie, our executive chef, who's currently over from London, has been here for the last month. He'll leave next week and return in a month, so we have these fantastic check-ins with each other. Also, I think the lines of communication now help us maintain standards: Zoom, social media and WhatsApp. Our communications are way, way better than they were 10 years ago. These platforms allow us to connect, divide, conquer and ensure we listen to the customers.

We receive daily reports. If you came in for dinner tonight, by the time I wake up, I'll be reading a report about Bar and Grill, Manila—not just all the good parts but also where we went wrong, how to fix it and the solution. That's how we maintain standards. It's amazing.

How has the role of being a chef changed over the years?

Honestly, the job has changed for the better. It's exciting to see the young, prominent female and male chefs at the forefront and at the top of their game today. Social media has helped propel these chefs and their profiles. They gain recognition on those platforms, which makes them much more marketable.

We're very good at exposing those chefs, media training them and introducing things like the chef's table. [We train chefs to come out of] the dining room following their food, [to place] the dishes in front of



“But we’re here to be criticised, right? Everything we put on the plate is up for judgment”

the guests, [give] a 30-second introduction and then leave. My job [is also to help them] become more socially aware because they’re also marketing experts. They need insight into what they’re doing: how to come across, but more importantly, how to sell.

Chefs are brands. No different to what it’s like in the fashion industry. If they’ve created this incredible dish, it’s no different from a designer with a haute couture dress or a pair of jeans. It’s precisely the same with a chef. They need to know how to sell it and put it out there. So that role has changed dramatically. But for the best.

What is the key to making a successful menu?

Making a successful menu, for me, is about balance. I love customers coming in for three or four courses without feeling that everything is overly rich. I also think it’s essential to draw on local inspiration to transform these ingredients into something even better than they were. How do we stay somewhat semi-seasonal? And how do we give customers something unique, whether it’s a Beef Wellington, a fantastic fish and chips, or something that can create an unforgettable memory? That’s what restaurants

are about: breaking bread, having fun and making incredible memories.

When do you decide to listen to customer feedback?

Criticism is subjective. Everyone’s a critic now with these [holding up his phone], so I welcome that intrusion. If 50 customers say the same thing, then we need to change. Having that kind of feedback is crucial. The problem is that you’re judged by individuals who know less about food than you, so they get caught up in aesthetics. But for me, flavour profile is number one, how it looks is number two and then most importantly, are those plates devoured? Are they clean? Are the customers happy? But I welcome that kind of feedback.

I get frustrated when people leave reviews on some platforms but have never even been to the restaurant. So, you can’t take it all too seriously, but the consensus daily will give you an insight. You need to change if they’re all saying the same thing. If there are one or two little gripes, you must stay focused and not get pulled down by those little bits of negativity. But we’re here to be criticised, right? Everything we put on the plate is up for judgment.

Ramsay presents one
of his culinary creations
Opposite page: The
team at Gordon Ramsay
Bar & Grill Philippines



BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

These artist residency programmes offer a nurturing space for both emerging and established creators, fostering collaboration and innovative ideas that lead to remarkable works

By Jove Moya. Photography by Stéphane Cauchi. Shot on location at Port Tonic Art Center





Paolo Scarani, Alelee Andanar and Ian Giron with a sculpture by Alexis Minkiewicz



The story begins with a wooden boat and a dream. On April 25, 1956, Florentino Das, a humble cabin boy, reached the shores of Siargao after a harrowing 5,000-mile voyage from Hawaii. Joy and excitement filled his heart as he endured the fierce winds, loneliness and many dangers of the sea to reach this moment.

As he descended from his small boat—the *Lady Timarau*—he cried, jumped and threw his hands up in excitement, but to the frightened locals, he appeared to be a marauding pirate and in panic, they hurriedly locked themselves in their homes.

After wandering through, he found a local teacher who sent a wire to the Philippine Navy. When the latter received the news, Das was finally celebrated for his incredible feat and was called “The Filipino Sinbad”.

“Das was not supposed to be in Siargao, but the currents brought him there,” says Martin Andanan, co-founder of Siargao Artiste in Residence (IAO AIR), finding a parallel to how they, he and the artists, found their way to the island. “When Das was stranded, my grandfather



Clockwise: The art centre provides a good view of the ocean; The Port Tonic Centre has well lit interiors, thanks to its strategic window placements; Sculpture by Andreas Senoner; Paolo Scarani poses in front of the artworks by Arvin Nogueras



was the mayor. So when the property was sold, we immediately bought it in the Nineties. We've also set up a landmark [for Das]."

IAO AIR is an initiative that connects Filipino artists to art centres, residency programmes and art cooperatives in Europe and Latin America.

Co-founded by Martin and his wife Alelee, the programme offers a chance for artists to live and be inspired by the pristine beauty of Siargao.

Foreign artists under the IAO AIR programme stay in Tangbo, Siargao, for four to eight weeks to fully immerse themselves in the beauty and spirit of the island and

its people. "Because of the exchange programme, Siargao will be re-introduced to the world not only as a surfing capital but as a haven for artists," Alelee says.

She adds that while Siargao is a hotspot for surfing, many islands, such as Tangbo, remain unexplored. "To me, most of Siargao remains a hidden gem. Sure, foreigners know about tourist spots, but there are still so many places to explore on the island, and this exchange programme is important in our mission to introduce lesser-known spaces."

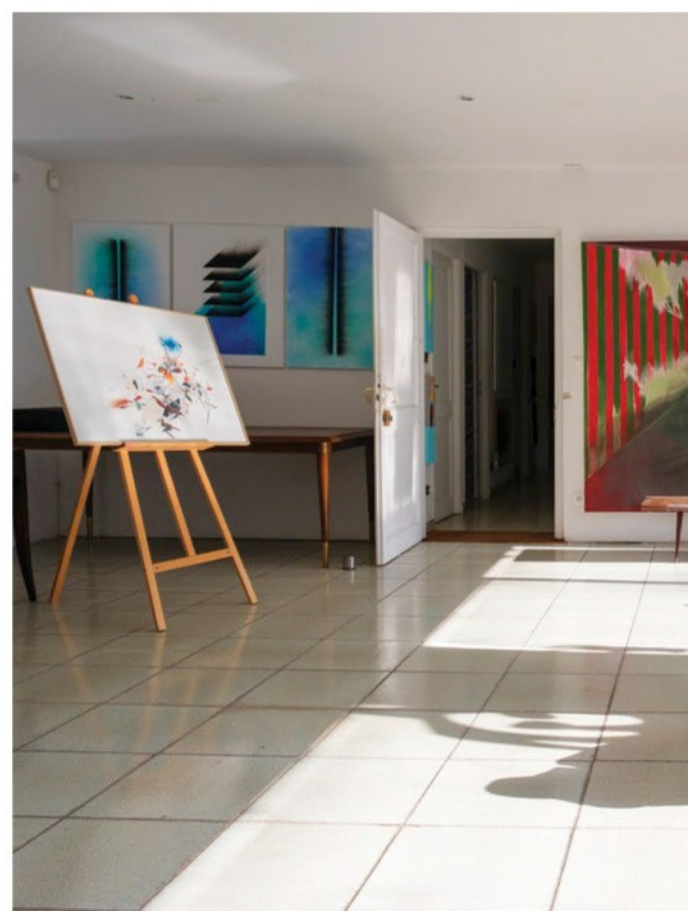
IAO AIR has collaborated with two leading European art centres—the Port Tonic Art Centre



Anticlockwise: Ian Giron poses for a photo; Artworks are hung on the walls of Port Tonic Art Centre; Both art residences offer a peaceful view for artists inside and out; The art centre features direct dock access, allowing for a warm welcome to visitors arriving by water; Foreign artists can enjoy a brand new sight from the artist centre

“Port Tonic is housed in a former shipyard directly on the Mediterranean Sea near Saint Tropez. It provides incredible light and colour”

— PAOLO SCARANI





(PTAC) in the south of France and NVS, an art cooperative based in Lisbon [Centro Cultural de Ambulante]. As of this writing, Filipino contemporary artists Jigger Cruz and Arvin Nogueras are in a residency programme with Port Tonic.

“We started this residency programme about a decade ago to provide young artists from Asia, South America and Europe with a unique experience in a special place. Port Tonic is housed in a former shipyard directly on the Mediterranean Sea near Saint Tropez. It provides incredible light and colour,” says Paolo Scarani, the executive director and co-founder of PTAC.

“The south of France, especially in the 20th century, was home to many of the most important artists, including Picasso, who found

inspiration here. The area has a very distinct and special vibe. We invite these artists to experience this place’s beauty and create new emotions through their art,” he adds.

Scarani explains that they don’t typically invite French artists to join the Port Tonic residency programme because they are already familiar with the environment. What truly interests them is seeing the reactions of those who come from different backgrounds and different areas.

“For many Asian artists, for example, arriving in Europe can be a shock— but in a positive way. They must adapt to the local culture and environment, which helps them grow. This new energy can spark incredible work if they are truly artists,” Scarani observes.

For Port Tonic Art Centre co-founder and treasurer Xavier

Anticlockwise: Alelee Andanar; A “beast” sculpture by Alexis Minkiewicz can be seen just outside the art centre; A sculpture can be found inside the art centre to inspire visitors and artists alike; Artworks by Filipino artist, Jigger Cruz

Sautier Magnan, the key to unlocking creativity is creating a supportive and confident atmosphere. He believes that artists thrive when they feel empowered and secure.

“To build a good artist, you must make them confident,” he says. “If you just put them in more challenging atmospheres, they become an element of the market, but if you put them in an ambience where confidence thrives, you can boost their creativity.

FOR THE COMMUNITY

Siargao is facing several challenges, including the growing issue of gentrification caused by rapid tourism development in the area. When asked about it, the Andanars maintain that their focus is and will always be the welfare of the island’s residents.

Their 10,000 square-metre property is in a fifth-class barangay, which, Martin explains, both hinders and helps their programme’s development. “Fortunately and unfortunately”, he says, “the barangay where we are situated is still developing, which is why it’s not a full-blown tourist hotspot. Our property is one of the largest in the area, and the local government is still waiting for roads and infrastructure to catch up before further development happens.”

Despite these challenges, the residency has been attracting positive attention. “We’ve been getting a lot of great feedback, and people we don’t even know are eager



“For me, it’s all about the connection between people. So when Ian Giron brought up the idea of the residency programme, I immediately said yes” — ALELEE ANDANAR



to visit this part of Siargao, thanks to the residency,” Alelee says.

For Alelee, one of the residency programme’s most significant contributions to Siargao has been its cultural and educational impact on the local community. “The locals get the opportunity to meet the artists, and there’s often great engagement there, especially with the barangay’s younger members. The children get exposed to art, talent and new ways of thinking—a huge part of our vision for them.”

She continues, “I’m focused on educating the younger generation.

I’ve seen firsthand how excited they are to interact with the artists and try things they’ve never done before. Some of the kids were holding a paintbrush for the first time. You never know where you might find hidden talent.”

Alelee believes that the magic of Siargao can only be fully grasped when you’re there in person.

“My husband has always deeply loved the island and influenced me. When you visit the island yourself, you’ll understand exactly what I mean,” she says, adding that her

feelings for the place have grown so deep and complex that words can no longer capture them.

“For me, it’s all about the connection between people. So when Ian Giron brought up the idea of the residency programme, I immediately said yes. My goal was to promote the island’s hidden wonders from the get-go. I would talk to my friends about it and encourage them to visit, but sharing this island with the rest of the world is the most important thing the IAO AIR can accomplish.”



A full-page photograph of an Antarctic landscape. In the foreground, dark, calm water reflects the sky and the distant mountains. Several large, white icebergs float in the water. In the background, jagged, snow-covered mountains rise from the water's edge. The sky is a pale, hazy blue with soft, wispy clouds. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

SEVENTH HEAVEN

Antarctica, the so-called last continent, is a distant destination to which even the highest-resolution photos fail to do justice, with a famously violent sea-crossing before you arrive. Fortunately, there are now alternative ways to get there *By Chris Dwyer*



Slipping a local glass of carménère in a Santiago bar, we were suddenly hit by the dizzying realisation of the magnitude of the adventure we were about to embark on: an Antarctic expedition cruise. The trip had been almost a year in the planning—Antarctica is categorically not somewhere you rock up to on a whim.

Heading to the end of the Earth begins with a 48-hour journey from Asia—and that only gets you to Patagonia, which is still 6,000km from the final destination. Guests usually embark from Ushuaia in Argentina or Puerto Williams in Chile on a 48-hour crossing of the notorious Drake Passage, a terrifying 800km stretch of seriously turbulent seas, featuring waves that can measure up to 12 metres, with stomach-emptying results.

Some will tell you that crossing The Drake is a crucial rite of passage before you can enjoy Antarctica; a traveller's badge of honour. But given the alternative of flying there direct in two hours, which would you choose?

Luxury cruise line Silversea, which organised our trip, partners with Antarctic Airways to arrange charter flights as part of its Antarctica Bridge: Fly and Cruise programme—a fast track to the last continent. (There's the added quirk factor of the aircraft being liveried to look like a penguin. Seriously.) After a night at the Ritz-Carlton Santiago, included in the package, the adventure of a lifetime started with our first charter flight to Punta Arenas, the capital of Chile's southernmost region,

where we overnighted and tried on Silversea's expedition kit. It supplies a toasty Gore-Tex expedition jacket—ours to keep—as well as mandatory wellies for all land excursions, waterproof over-trousers and a backpack. Our own kit, eventually purchased after far too much deliberation, included multiple thermal layers, hats, gloves and polarised sunglasses.

The next day, Antarctic Airways flew us in business class-sized seats to King George Island—a journey of a mere two hours. There was an undeniable feeling of smugness as we soared high above ships plying the fierce waters below, their swaying passengers doubtless wishing that they too had considered an aerial alternative.

As our penguin began its descent and the magnificent white continent first came into view, sunlight reflected off icebergs set against a scarcely believable backdrop of perfect clear blue skies, snow-capped mountains and a treacherous, jagged coastline. Having grown up reading terrifying tales of the ill-fated British explorer known as Scott of the Antarctic, it was difficult not to get a little emotional on seeing the seventh continent for the very first time.

“Arctic” comes from the Greek word *arktos*, meaning “bear”—it's an easy way to remember that it's the Arctic that has polar bears, not the Antarctic, which essentially translates as “not the Arctic”. Antarctica does, however, feature 8 per cent of the world's land surface,



Clockwise, from far left: Antarctica is home to millions of penguins; Silversea Cruises' Silver Endeavor is designed for polar cruising; Gargantuan glaciers and icebergs give Antarctica its nickname, The White Continent



26 quadrillion tonnes of ice, 70 per cent of the world's freshwater, a record low temperature of -93 degrees Celsius, winds of up to 320km/h—and penguins.

Given that it's the coldest, highest, driest and windiest continent, it's unsurprising that only one sixth of one per cent of the world's population has ever been there. From 19th-century whale hunters and fur traders to today's lucky travellers, fewer than a million people in all of history have trod on its icy expanse.

King George Island is home to Antarctica's largest settlement, a metropolis with a population of 150. For a continent almost twice the size of Australia, it was a sobering reminder that we'd be hard pressed to be anywhere more remote. It also has those penguins. Inquisitive, cheeky, playful, stinky and supremely clumsy, they were the perfect welcoming party as we manoeuvred from the plane onto the Zodiac inflatable boat, heading towards Silver Endeavour, our home for the next several days, which was moored just offshore, basking in the unexpected sunshine.

With room for 160 guests and 200 crew members, this is one very special vessel. Expressly designed for polar cruising, she is also the most luxurious expedition ship at sea. That quickly became clear as our brilliant Filipino butler Terrence showed us round our jaw-dropping suite up on the eighth deck, accommodation that would wow in a landlocked hotel, let alone somewhere with

humpback whales swimming just below the expansive terrace. It included a huge marble bathroom, elegant dining area, ultra-comfortable living space, vast bed overlooking the floor-to-ceiling windows and a fridge filled with champagne and wines—Silversea cruises are all-inclusive.

Silver Endeavour's world-class expedition crew is made up of scientists and researchers, experts in their fields, from whales to penguins to geology. They carefully briefed us on staying a minimum of five metres away from all wildlife, leaving absolutely nothing behind us in the most pristine of wildernesses and the mandatory disinfection process on every ship entrance and exit.

Captain Kai Ukkonen, an affable Finnish master mariner with vast experience in polar cruising, then gave his welcome before our Expedition Leader, Jamie Watts, added: "Adventure begins here at the edge of the world—channel your inner penguin and turn the Discovery Channel into reality".

He wasn't wrong. What unfolded was the most extraordinary six days of travel of our lives.

Just 20 minutes after setting off for our first stop of Charlotte Bay, two impossibly large humpback whales—which each weigh the same as five fully grown African elephants—surfaced for air just metres from our suite's balcony. Like a vast balloon slowly hissing, the primeval

IMAGES: CINDY ASSELBERG (WHALE); MATTEO IMBRIANI (ARTS CAFÉ)



A humpback whale appears **Opposite**, **from top**: Cosy interiors on board Silversea Cruises' Silver Endeavor; Luxury lodging allows guests to experience Antarctica in style



From 19th-century whale hunters and fur traders to today's lucky travellers, fewer than a million people in all of history have trod on its icy expanse





IMAGES PEDRO GRIMALDI (ICEBERG); JUSTIN DUNCAN (ZODIAC CRUISE)



Clockwise, from far left: Striking hues of blue and white; Exploring the icy Antarctic waters; Enjoying the view from Silver Endeavor

sound as they exhaled through their blowhole echoed across the iceberg-strewn waters. Utterly mesmerising, the sight evoked awe and wonder, bringing out the inner child in anyone who experienced it. Happily, today there are 110,000 of these majestic creatures in the Southern Ocean, a figure even higher than before commercial whaling started.

For our daily excursions by Zodiac, once we'd kitted up, we headed to the boot room and donned appropriate footwear—in a very Silversea touch, hot air vents on the boot hangers dry and warm them between uses. Our first excursion brought us within 20 metres of humpback whales, while our second introduced us to chinstrap, gentoo and Adélie penguins.

On the rocky foreshore of a former Argentine research base, flanked by towering cliffs, absolutely everything was covered in guano, aka penguin poop, but the ungodly stench was soon forgotten thanks to their slapstick comedy antics. Whether face-planting on “penguin highways”—walking tracks they carve out in the ice—bumping into one another or jumping in and out of the water, they were endlessly entertaining.

On other days, our Zodiacs navigated vast ice-filled bays in perfect silence, apart from the occasional eerie thunder of huge ice chunks falling off glaciers in a phenomenon known as calving. It can cause mini tsunamis, adding an extra frisson on top of never knowing where or when a 40-tonne humpback whale may choose to surface for air.

Our first footsteps on the continental Antarctic mainland came at Neko Harbour, home to hundreds of nesting pairs of gentoos. We hiked up past Weddell seals

loafing lazily, while southern giant petrels and Polar skuas soared above. The skuas are vicious scavengers and, reflecting Antarctica's brutal circle of life, we saw two steal a penguin egg from right under its mother, who howled as they then tore the egg and baby apart.

Other days brought elephant seals, which weigh up to four tonnes, lolling on brash ice—another name for pack ice—before slumping inelegantly into the water. Most menacing of all were the pods of shiny, jet-black orcas, patrolling the waters like U-boats seeking out their targets. They are infamous for toying with their prey, and one guest on board captured footage of them tossing a seal in the air. Thankfully the water had been checked for orcas in advance before some guests chose to do a polar plunge, jumping into the frigid water—albeit with a rope tied around, just in case they needed hauling in.

It's not all frozen adventuring: back on board, a perfect caipirinha or martini during the evening briefing was the prelude to dinner in one of the three excellent restaurants. The standards here are nothing less than exceptional; a bowl of *cacio e pepe*, for example, was as good as one I'd had in Rome a few weeks earlier.

The most surreally beautiful moments invariably involved vast, haunting icebergs, some the size of football stadiums, that would float serenely past us, while smaller icebergs ringed by water of every possible shade of blue provided a refuge for tired penguins.

On our penultimate day, we awoke to a dazzling sight that looked to have been created by AI, with the entire majestic landscape mirrored perfectly on the water beneath us—Antarctica proving, once again, to be the ultimate destination for reflection.

THE LAST WORD

We ask the people we feature a round of quickfire questions to give us more insight into their personality. This month: Senator Risa Hontiveros

By Chit L Lijauco. Photography by Mark Nicdao

Describe in one word your life as a senator.

Purposeful.

What is the best advice you've ever received in your political career?

Virtù e fortuna. It's about individual initiative and chance.

What advice would you give younger people who want to follow in your footsteps?

Follow your bliss.

Favourite way to spend a quiet day with your family?

At home, we rest, eat together, read, etc.

Favourite Filipino dish that always feels like home to you?

Sinigang.

What do you think you'd be doing if you weren't in politics?

Theatre and music.

A recent book, podcast or documentary that impacted you?

None of these, but the series of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

What is your go-to playlist or type of music when you need an energy boost?

OPM, Broadway, standards, etc.

If you could travel anywhere, where would you go and why?

Paris. I love the history and culture.

Who is your role model outside of politics?

Pope Francis.



A Taste of Sakura, A Celebration of Spring.

Seasonal themed kaiseki and omakase available for March 2025.



山里

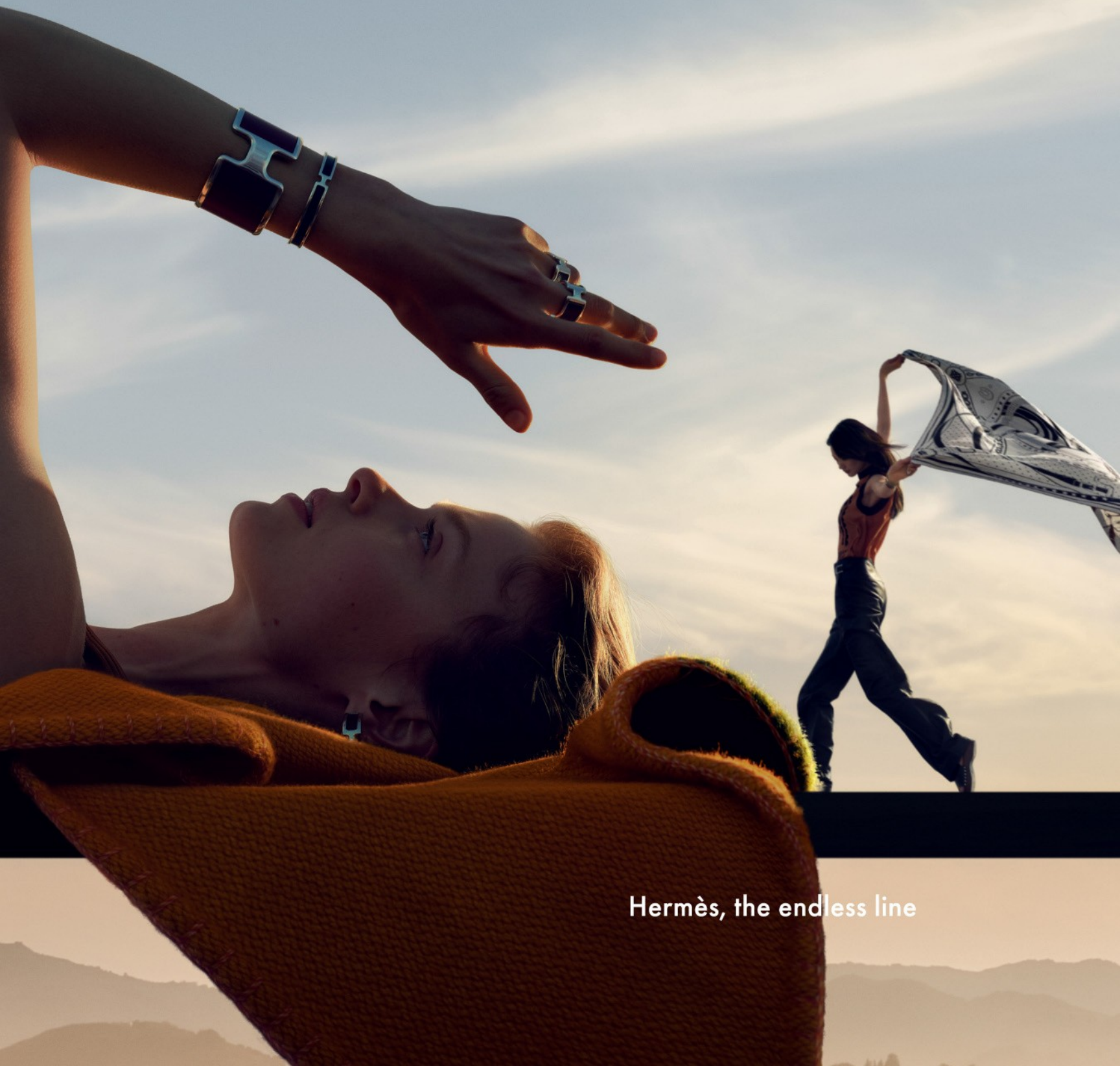
YAMAZATO
JAPANESE FINE DINING

Contact us for reservations and recommendations at:
+63 917 818 9868 or email us at yamazato.service@hotelokuramanila.com

2 Portwood Street, Newport World Resorts, Newport City, Pasay City 1309
www.hotelokuramanila.com



HERMÈS
PARIS



Hermès, the endless line